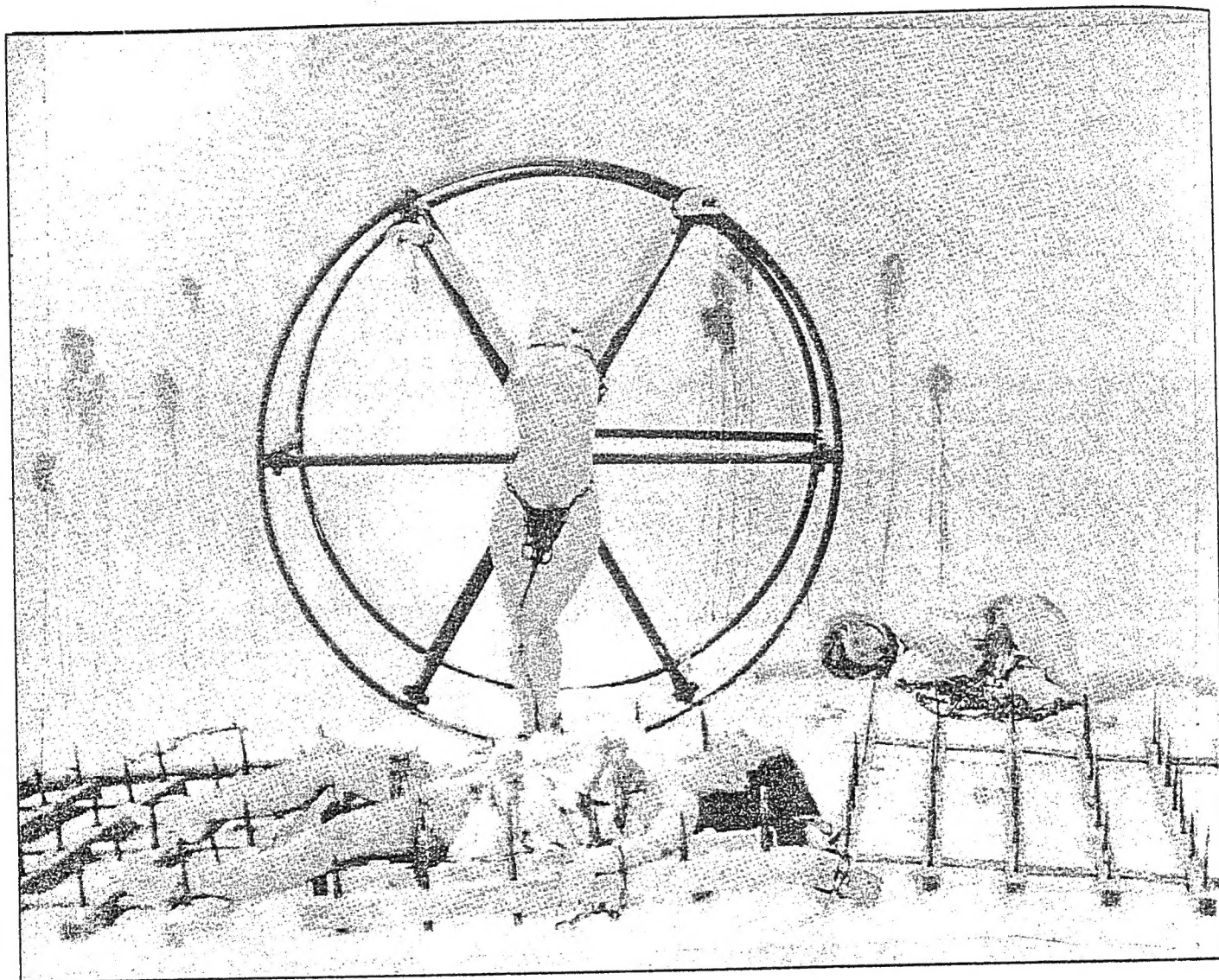


SLEAZOID EXPRESS



SLEAZOID EXPRESS

Produced, Written,
Directed and Conceived by
Bill Landis and Michelle Clifford

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Cash, check or money order to:
Bill Landis or Michelle Clifford
PO Box 620
Old Chelsea Station
New York, New York 10011
USA

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Bill Landis and Michelle Clifford

**THANK YOU
BOB TROMBETTA
JAY HAWKINS
DYANNE THORNE
HOWARD MAURER
... AND THE STAFF
AT SIMON & SCHUSTER**

*... and
Sam McAbee
Michael Bowen
Paul Gaita
Lisa Petrucci
Joel Shepard
Matt Walker*



*Mrs. and Mr. Sleazoid
Times Square Playland Arcade, 1986*

"Normal love isn't interesting. I assure you that it's incredibly boring."

Roman Polanski

GALLIC TREATS

Death Is As Transient As Orgasm

EDEN AND AFTER

(1970) Director: Alain Robbe-Grillet

Alain Robbe-Grillet's screenplay for the surrealistically tinged memory piece *Last Year at Marienbad*, and his innovation of the "non-novel," fiction with no objective narrative commentary, gave him permanent art world respectability. Yet Robbe-Grillet has always been drawn instinctively and unabashedly to sadomasochism. He admittedly, as a boy, posed his little dolls in bondage positions for play. His early directorial effort *L'Immortelle* began to dabble in the theme of déjà-vu snuff oriented S&M. This leitmotif reared itself more openly in *Trans-Europe Express* and the later *La Belle Captive*, but in a semi-conventional thriller format.

Eden and After is one of the rarely seen, legendarily graphic, most freeform of Robbe-Grillet's films. Each sequence revolves around a dazzling nugget of S&M, degradation and snuff. But in surreal fashion, characters that die reappear in subsequent segments. Death is as transient as orgasm in the universe Robbe-Grillet so deftly creates.

The credits ensue repetitively after the title *Eden and After* appears in French as a neon sign outside a club announcing it flickers on and off. The arena for the manias is a nightclub called Eden that the heroine (Catherine Jourdan) and her student friends visit after their university studies. The guys are generally dark haired and conventionally handsome Frenchmen; Jourdan and the second lead are willowy blondes; various submissive women who are fragmentarily viewed are dark-haired. Robbe-Grillet's wife, Catherine, the pseudonymous author of the S&M classic *L'Image*, partakes in the proceedings as the conductor of the sadistic scenes.

The club Eden is an abstractionist maze of ads for Cinzano and Coca-Cola drinks punctuated by photos of the female actresses in the film. Its cubicles are separated by a myriad of partitions. A formal garcon is always present. The action opens as a girl is gangbanged on a table. One of the leading men wipes the sweat off his head after he's done. Jourdan assists in holding the victim down. As she is throughout the film, she's a perfect switch, both motivator and foil for the action that occurs. Jourdan looks like the mix of porn star Serena mixed with Mia Farrow. Cut back to the students sitting in school. One works on a long mathematical equation on a blackboard that concludes with a drawing equaling a fish.

Back to the nightclub, where the garcon rolls a single dice on a drink table (hence the title for the film's showing on French TV as *4 Rolls the Dice*). A girl is blindfolded, given a gun to fire, which she does at the ceiling. Jourdan poises her arm for the final shot, which "kills" her boyfriend. Jourdan co-conspires with the second blonde to switch drinks and poison another boy.

A sharply dressed, enigmatic man (Pierre Zimmer) enters the club. Zimmer breaks a bottle and has the second blonde pick up the pieces, as the camera lingers lovingly on her increasingly bloodied hand. Zimmer has Jourdan sniff hallucinogenic powder off his arm, causing her to have flashbacks and flashforwards. Women languish in cages and lie dead impaled on spikes. She has flipbook visions of the bizarre activities that have happened and premonitions of what will occur. Jourdan is brought out of her intense trip by a cool drink.

The characters wander through a desolate industrial space. A giant machine spurts what appears to be come mixed with blood. Jourdan touches it, revels in it. There is an old fashioned whipping with a chained, suspended girl. The second blonde, noticeable from afar by her longish hair, makes a cautious, slow, barefoot walk between long shards of broken glass. Back at the club, a girl is forced to suck up a raw egg. By the river, the heroine finds Zimmer dead, with his head bludgeoned and covered in blood. When

she goes to show the snuff to her friends, the corpse is gone, but she retrieves a bloodied postcard of a Moorish structure in Tunisia.

Zimmer reappears and accompanies the characters as they sit in a theater watching films of Tunisia. Film and life meld together as they're suddenly within the setting they're observing. Jourdan keeps searching for the image she saw in the postcard. The guys go horseback riding wearing Arabian clothing. Jourdan wanders about Moorish structures that are as much of a maze as the Eden nightclub. The second blonde gives her a pedicure.

Zimmer and Jourdan make stealthily normal love as a plethora of severe S&M images zoom through her mind, from blindfolded girls in suspended cages, a nude girl with a sharply bowled hairdo descending a metal staircase flashing repeatedly. A nude woman points a gun at herself and lies in a pool of blood. Jourdan is blindfolded, bound, put in a ragged smock and threatened with scorpions. She meets an approximation of her older doppelganger (Mrs. Robbe-Grillet) that dresses her in the same post-mod threads.

The characters enjoy the beach. They dance as Arabs play traditional music by a nighttime bonfire. One of the guys accidentally drives a truck past Zimmer, he falls down and smashes his head, reproducing the scene she had witnessed earlier. The heroine's doppelganger vanishes into thin air. The closing seconds of the film place the characters back in the Eden nightclub, which looks like a gathering of intellectuals taking a break, and it's as if none of the where any of the prior events took place. That everything existed in Jourdan's (and the filmmaker's) head. Jourdan looks about meditatively, and the movie closes on that note.

Eden and After is an S&M lover's bouillabaisse. The entire scope of activity, ranging from the light to the terminal is explored explicitly and in depth. Like a John Coltrane album, all of the severe fetishistic riffs are repeated, refracted, studied intently, then abstracted. One of the film's essential underlying themes is of thoughts of what cannot be acted out with any safety or sanity fly uncontrollably through your head during regular sex. *Eden and After* is Robbe-Grillet's first color movie, and he gives it a postmodern look that simultaneously coldly angular and invitingly sizzling. The Paris of *Eden and After* is relentlessly contemporary, and the Tunisian settings lend an exotic running counterpoint.

The casting is perfect. Jourdan, with her short blonde hair and lithe, shapely figure, is a fine conductor of S&M sensuality. She's virtually never offscreen, and she carries you with her from one erotic adventure to the next. The movie steadfastly refuses to buckle to conventional narrative and audaciously declares what some consider extreme sexuality is the norm. In true surrealist fashion, it's like fragments of thoughts, reminiscences and fantasies turned into a living, breathing entity. *Sleazoid* has always loved Robbe-Grillet's work, and this is perhaps the gem in his prickly, touch it and you bleed crown.

Eden and After is available in a good clear version from Video Screams. It's in French without subtitles, but that hardly matters. Included on the tape is an interview with the director, who describes the film using mathematical, diagrammatic pages. A schematic more than a script. It was just what was in his head. One actress who worked for Robbe-Grillet once commented, "He's very charming and very funny. He got me to get pricked by a pin and tied up for real in his film"

"O" Redux

FRUITS OF PASSION

(1981) Director: Shuji Terayama

Mr. Sleazoid originally caught *Fruits of Passion* at a class upper east side theater in Manhattan when it first opened. Seeing it on the home screen is a decadent pleasure. The movie is an exotic marriage of Far East *Emmanuelle* settings to a theoretical sequel to *The Story of O*. It was co-produced by Antonale Dauman, who used a similar methodology in the revered art-house hit *In the Realm of the Senses*. *Fruits of*

Passion is another of the few art house movies that effortlessly employs hardcore sex as part of the texture, without shattering its dreamlike flow.

In *The Fruits of Passion*, Klaus Kinski plays Sir Stephen, who confines O (Isabelle Illiers) in a 1920s Shanghai brothel. Keeping with the concept of the original novel, Sir Stephen erotically lives through his lover's various degradations and bizarre experiences. When she arrives at the brothel, O is dictated the rules: 101 lashes for refusing a customer; and a visualization of a Chinese woman being flogged on an elaborate bondage rack flashes; 101 days of starvation for the same, as a disheveled girl grovels before a dog bowl on the floor.

O is the only white prostitute in the brothel, and spends much of her time pensively nude in her room. Sir Stephen peeks on her servicing clients, including giving head to a brutal looking Cantonese butcher. She's bound and forced to watch him fucking his girlfriend (Arielle Dombasle). A young, poor Chinese boy develops a crush on her, and brings her constant gifts of flowers, only to be turned away by the Madam when he doesn't have enough money to pay for a session.

Surrealist imagery appears throughout the film like drops of rain on leaves. O is bound on a bedframe on the roof of a building. One prostitute with gambling debts shoots a john and kills herself, her body floating on a grand piano in a river. Another performs dog training on a client, as she flashes back to her doing the same to her drunken father as a child. O imagines herself confined within a chalk square drawn by her father, as if the imaginary walls are real; her father looks back at her and he's transformed into Sir Stephen. The Chinese boy eventually accumulates enough money to pay for O's services, and Sir Stephen watches, fuming with jealousy. He opens the door, revealing a seascape, and shoots the boy dead, and tries to kill himself.

Corrine Clery was a fine O in the more commercially oriented, fashion photography derived but still entertaining adaptation of *The Story of O*. However, Isabelle Illiers is perfect in this role. Not only does she physically resemble the exquisite sensuality of the novel's character, but personifies the pensive moodiness of a masochist. Illiers retains such a quiet dignity, one generally absent from actresses who perform actual sex acts in a film. Kinski gives an all out degenerate performance, enthusiastically and unashamedly doing hardcore, living up to his rakish reputation. As his girlfriend, Arielle Dombasle is a willowy but assertive blonde. While Kinski is a unique case in himself, from his sexual proclivities to his many cinematic roles in art-house and exploitation movies, both of the female leads subsequently appeared in many legitimate films, proving once again that Europe doesn't hold erotically charged roles against actresses. Not the double standard that is applied in the United States.

Fruits of Passion is an erotic delicacy, one that has actually ripened and grown more compelling since Mr. Sleazoid initially saw it. It's a trapeze act, a midpoint of art house aesthetics and graphic exploitation. The film is available through many dupers on vhs, it's also recently been issued on DVD by Anchor Bay.

Helmut Newton Meets XXX

SPERMULA (WATCHER IN THE ATTIC)

(1976) Director: Charles Matton

Spermula is one of the most bizarre films made in mid-1970s France. It has a flimsy, hokey sci-fi premise that motivates the action that takes a funny back seat to the action. A group of glamorous women are sent to Earth rescue their dying planet by an entity called "Big Mother." Their mission: drain the sperm out of men, thus sustaining its life-giving force.

Big Mother's missionaries have the haughty attitude of Madame Claude prostitutes meshed with a 1937 copy of *Vogue* magazine. They land in a Mayor's mansion, and interact with its various inhabitants. The Mayor is played by Georges Geret, who played the vice overlord in *La Punition* (see *Sleazoid* #4).



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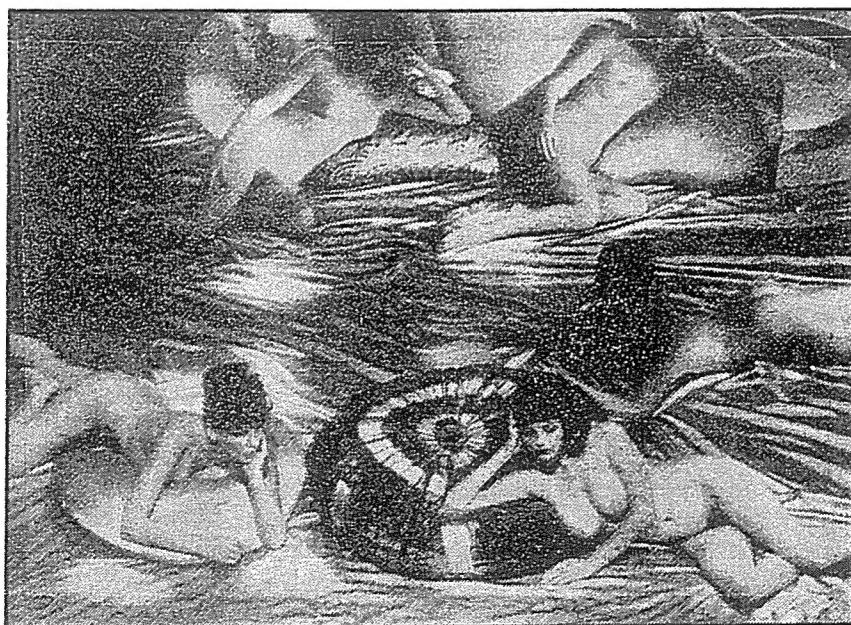
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An arrangement of the Spermulites ready to party

Here, he's even more exhausted and world-weary. In another sharp bit of casting, the mayor's social climbing assistant is played by seen it all Udo Kier, who's been a known decadent quantity since *Mark of the Devil*.

The action is punctuated by the spermulites' planet getting increasingly darker as the gals sexually abandon themselves on Earth. The women are arranged like a living Helmut Newton photograph come to life. Art deco objects surrounding nude glamazons with 1930s hairstyles, the girls are placed in a plethora of mathematical combinations. The sex constantly borders on hardcore yet shows no meat shots or close-ups of penetration.

The movie is permeated by subversive sexual touches. There's a midget master of ceremonies during the orgiastic proceedings. A bishop is seduced by a group of the spermulites, his cape billowing in a swimming pool as a group of women fellate him under water. Cocksucking is one of the leitmotifs of the film, yet it also shows a great deal of regular fucking. In a tweak on fashion model vanity, Big Mother doesn't like that one of her charges is enjoying the sex instead of executing it as a mission so she threatens her with age. "I'm going to turn you - 45!!!" The woman screeches because suddenly she's middle-aged with wrinkles.

The movie comes to a terminal end in which the spermulites abandon their mission, letting their home planet rot for the pure sexual pleasure they're now relishing and unwilling to give up. Udo Kier gets into a Volkswagon, and flips the car over in an emptied swimming pool for his finale.

Spermula is a difficult film to pigeonhole, which is one reason it's so entertaining. It's almost like an adaptation of a graphic novel that doesn't exist, eschewing conventional narrative, instead offering a plethora of gorgeous, nude women in a style akin to *Helmut Newton's Illustrated*. *Spermula* is a genuine Gallic taste treat, another sexy spice on Video Screams' extensive Euroslaze menu.

Georges Pichard Onscreen: Cartoons Come To Life

**PAULETTE, LA PAUVRE PETITE MILLIARDAIRE
(PAULETTE, THE POOR LITTLE MILLIONAIRESS)
(1986) Director: Claude Confortes**

Sleazoid always hotly anticipated any cinematic adaptation of Georges Pichard's graphic novels. It hoped *Paulette* would live up to, at the very least, comic strip adaptations like *The Perils of Gwendoline* or *Barbarella*, which may not be exactly like their source material, but manage to deliver the goods.. *Paulette*, with its numerous episodes, makes perfect film fodder. For readers unfamiliar with the strip, *Paulette* was Georges Pichard's first major popular success, a comic strip in which he collaborated with surrealist artist Georges Wolinski, who wrote its script. It's about a poor little rich girl who floats from one kinky situation to the next. Paulette is initiated into a bizarre bondage secret society by her parents; she has an old man companion/manservant named Joseph to watch over her who has the ability to transform himself into a buxom woman; they get kidnapped by a sheik and free themselves as the rest of the harem is lead away in chains; Paulette ascends to heaven after a motorcycle accident and is reincarnated as the football for nude players before an audience of hippies; she triumphantly catfights a biker gang glamamazon; then on to an encounter with a circus of women that turns bloody and violent. And that's only the tip of the iceberg. The strip is also filled with Vietnam-era jokes, which probably accounts for it being barred from the USA at the time of its initial release in the late 60s and early 70s. Mr. Sleazoid was introduced to *Paulette* through imported copies of France's *Circus* magazine.

Unfortunately, the movie adaptation of *Paulette* is a disappointment. It re-creates some of the set pieces, builds up to scenes we never see, and inexplicably drops many of the others. Most faithful to the strip is the opening, in which Paulette giggles as she's kidnapped and rolled up in a carpet, and then dances

a nude can-can in a nightclub before a very appreciative audience. She's a gal who enjoys excitement, no matter where it leads. There's the transformation scene with Joseph into a female, and the Board of Directors meeting where Paulette struts in to the displeasure of a clutch of stodgy businessmen, sitting at the head of the board table and putting her feet up.

Typical of the film is how it builds to one of the strip's highlights. Paulette infiltrates one of her rich family's factories by acting like a poor orphaned girl. In the strip all the girls wear uniform smocks and kerchiefs, and sing in unison as they're chained to machines. It's a predecessor to Pichard's strip, *L'Usine*, about rough trade girls enslaved in the train factory of a frail old industrialist. However, like much of the movie, you see the precursor to the action – the girls lining up in front of the factory and Paulette getting the job – without the payoff of seeing the girls in turmoil. The film is less S&M action than madcap heiress hi-jinks.

However, the film doesn't shy away from sadism totally. Paulette receives electroshock torture in an asylum after the businessmen behind her family's company are fed up with her giving away money to any frog with a sob story.

Other scenes from the original strip, like the circus of women, or the biker gang of women are completely missing. The movie pads scenes out with a bad Europop band playing. In short, *Paulette* is a mess that doesn't live up to its great freaky kinky potential. Which is a pity, because it's really well cast. Jean Marie makes a fine Paulette, as does Catherine LePrince as Joseph. They're more than capable of incarnating the comic book characters in looks and attitude. The frustrating thing about the movie is that it seems capable of being faithful to the strip, but pathologically drops sequences midway or eliminates them.

Paulette was never released stateside and isn't carried by any video companies. Our pal Joel Shepard showed us a copy borrowed from San Francisco's Francophile Le Video store.



The iconographic image from Paulette

AMERICAN MIXED COMBOS

THE GRASSHOPPER

(1970) Director: Jerry Paris

The Grasshopper was originally released by National General Pictures, a distributor that handled films like Larry Cohen's first big horror hit, *Daddy's Gone A Hunting* that were too quirky for the majors. When originally released in 1970, it was promoted as a risqué movie, with a lurid poster of Jacqueline Bisset crouching nude in shadow. *The Grasshopper* strips the glitter off Las Vegas while depicting the all too real, very rapid downward spiral of the twisting in the wind, directionless heroine.

Jackie Bisset, usually cast as international glam girls, plays Chris, a young girl who runs away from her sensible but dull home in British Columbia. She drives towards Hollywood. On the way her car breaks down, so she ends up hitching. A TV comic picks her up and insists she's got to see Vegas at least once, pulling her along on his way there.

Once there, She meets a straightlaced bank employee she meets at a party with the comedian. She sleeps with a succession of men, sometimes leaving them Dear John letters on the pillow, with each encounter giving only fleeting distraction from her depression. Eventually she needs money and is made to flash her chest to a casino owner for a topless showgirl job. The shows are these feathered headdress affairs, very tourist Vegas. She sees pretty girls who hang out at the craps table who do their specialized form of casino hustle.

She meets a helpful homosexual and he becomes her confidante. He's the type of gay who likes to live vicariously through the beautiful girl who confides in him. Next, she's grooving at a pot party orgy with members of the band The Ice Cubes, balling one of them in the shower. Eventually she has an affair with the comedian who brought her out of her way to Vegas, but is heartbroken when she learns he's married and sees him caring for his infant. It

becomes a gnawing reminder of her hunger for real affection.

Jackie runs into Tommy Marcott (Jim Brown), an ex pro football player she originally met at the comedian's party. Tommy's legs have been wrecked from years of using his body as a battering ram in football games. They see the hurt in each other. They quickly fall in love and marry in a depressing cheap ceremony before a tired Vegas justice of the peace. They hope for the future against all odds, and go against society's taboo by having an interracial marriage, which was one of the film's main selling shockers. They wanna be happy, dammit. They *are* broke, but they each finally have some love for the first time.

Tommy is set up by a bunch of mobsters as the figurehead for a rug joint. He thinks it can bring him some financial stability. Which is all he really needs to be complete at this point. It quickly goes bust. The mobster orchestrating this is thoroughly hateful and loathsome. He has a sour punk underage bride he admits he picked up off a playground. The crude little bitch constantly phallically sucks candy pops as she shoots hostile looks at everyone. Eventually the mobster makes a sexual come on to Tommy's new bride. When she disgustedly rebuffs him, he beats her. When Tommy finds out he chases the mobster down to a golf course and punches him out. Sealing his fate in Vegas.

Tommy and Chris run to L.A., where they're stuck in a cheap furnished room. At the moment Chris is about to leave Tommy, disillusioned about the state of their poverty and lack of fun. Tommy goes to meet another bro for what he thinks is a job. The guy is actually a cohort of the mobster and Tommy is gunned down, dead.

The mobster blackballs Chris and she can't find any work. The Ice Cube band member turns her out as a call girl, and then after pimping her takes everything she's made. Finally Chris meets Joseph Cotton, an aged businessman looking to keep a young girl. This grizzled mummy is the straw that breaks Chris' mind. Fed up, she feeds a yokel pilot some pot and he brings her up in the plane as she has him sky write FUCK IT across the Vegas skyline. Down on the ground porky pig and his pals with the silver bracelets are waiting for her. When the

long arm of the law asks her age, it's only "21." The film ends on that bitter note. So many sad changes for such a pretty young girl who just wants to have a little fun and glamour.

The Grasshopper is ahead of its kind, pre-*Casino*. It even seems made in 1974 rather than 1969; nobody dresses like a sixties freak. The heroine's resoluteness in not turning over and not giving in, makes it so unbearably sad. The protagonists (Bisset and Brown) are completely sympathetic. Each tragedy they endure is totally unexpected, taking you by surprise as if you're living it with them.

The cast is terrific. At the time *The Grasshopper* was made, Jim Brown was at the peak of his sports hero gone Hollywood scene, a notorious lothario. A known abuser of women with a thuggish black buck sexuality. But he's cast against type and does an excellent job. His Tommy is a quietly moving character. He knows his football days are over, is permanently damaged over the injuries and is smart enough to see he was being used as a dupe for gamblers. Jackie's sad face as she drifts from man to man is the leitmotif of the movie. Joseph Cotton is on his first circle of exploitation movie hell and drunken deterioration, which makes him more convincing. The cast of mostly unknowns works believably. *The Grasshopper* shows the Vegas paradigm that good deeds go unrewarded. And proved the theory that grasshoppers cannot be trained or controlled.

The Grasshopper was co-written by Garry Marshall. You know Garry from uber mainstream TV moneymakers like *Happy Days* and Hollywood glossies like *Pretty Woman*. The late director Jerry Paris also had an extensive television background, appearing in such mainstream family entertainment as *The Dick Van Dyke Show*. They've made comedies with laugh tracks. But look behind anyone who works in comedy and you'll find the depths of tragedy lurking behind the fourth wall.

Political Ginger

A PLACE CALLED TODAY (1972)

Director: Don Schain

In between his runaway exploitation successes of the *Ginger* series (see the Simon and Schuster *SLEAZOID EXPRESS* book, where they're covered extensively), their writer-director Don Schain and producer, Ralph

Desiderio, made the sleazoid political melodrama *A Place Called Today*. It's hard to say goodbye to what you really feel for. In *A Place Called Today*, Don's beginning to demonstrate his chops while still steadfastly refusing to let go of his exploitation roots. At the time *A Place Called Today* was made, director Schain and star Cheri were married co-workers; they tied the knot during *The Abductors*.



He'd learn to let go in time. Schain later went on to divorce Cheri and become a very successful producer of mainstream TV movies.

Both Schain and Desiderio are New Jersey natives, and the movie is a very homegrown look at the political upheavals that struck the state in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The movie was appropriately shot in Newark, which shockingly still looks the same after almost three decades. The storyline revolves around a mayoral race in an unnamed, troubled urban city. The incumbent mayor is a bewigged, paid off creep, obviously modeled off Newark's mob-connected Ralph Addinizio, who let the city burn during its sixties riots and ended up dying in prison. His challenger is Randy Johnson (played with malevolent intensity by J. Herbert Kerr), a black guy crowned with a small Afro who manipulates a white and black radical to plant bombs in order to terrorize the city into electing him. Johnson also co-conspires with Carolyn Schneider (Lana Wood, Natalie Wood's exploitation actress sister). Here, Lana plays the prototypical big-busted, Marxist oriented Jewish girl involved with supporting a black political agenda.

Dry-look journalist Ron Carlton (TV actor Richard Smedley) is torn between Carolyn and Cindy Cartwright (Cheri Caffaro). Cindy's father is a rich industrialist backing the incumbent, and she's living with Ron. He enjoys both topless encounters with the bountiful Ms. Wood (who, in the previous year, played "Plenty O'Toole" in the James Bond thriller *Diamonds*

Are Forever) and red-lit rubdowns of Cheri's nude body. Cheri's performance as Cindy is pure spicy *Ginger* throughout. Whether she's referring to her Bloody Mary breakfast, or giving a campaign speech for the corrupt mayor while clad in an ultra-miniskirt before a bunch of cheering construction workers. Among them Harry Reems, sans mustache, who also did a cameo in Schain's *The Abductors*.

Eventually our reporter hero has to choose between the women and the candidates. He opts to propose marriage to Cindy, who accepts. Despite the protestations of her wealthy father, who threatens not to give her another cent. That's fine with him, who wants to keep to his ethics as a man and a journalist. Though his instinct tells him that Johnson is behind the violence in the city, he arranges for a news report that virtually elects him, knowing that Johnson's got a better grip on the city's urban rot than the mob owned puppet mayor.

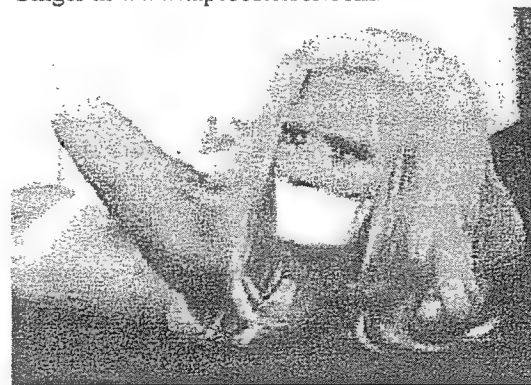
So far, despite the occasional bursts of sex and violence, the movie is fairly straightforward, almost like a slightly more adult TV movie. But then, Schain and Desiderio couldn't control their artistic urges. The movie explodes into a nihilistic, sexually assaultive, violent climax. After showering Cindy is kidnapped and wrapped up nude in a sleeping bag by the radicals. She's brought to crooked politico Johnson's office, where he sadistically tells her she's a symbol to be destroyed more than a human. Her mouth is wrapped with gaffers tape and her eyes plead hysterically for mercy. The black radical brutally rapes her on a lawn before slitting her throat and killing her in an extremely graphic sequence. Carolyn, despite her jealousy towards Cindy, rushes out to try to save her life, only to be killed in the police shootout. Reporter Ron hears of the trouble off a police radio and goes to the scene, only to be killed in the crossfire. Johnson is elected mayor, left with the heavy burden of guilt that he's responsible for the death of the honest journalist who got him elected, not to mention the two women he's left dead. The ending credits roll as the corpses of Ron and Carolyn lay on the grass, their hands almost touching one another, as lyrical seventies music plays.

When interviewed for the *SLEAZOID EXPRESS* book, Schain told Mr. Sleazoid that Paramount Pictures had an interest in the movie – *BUT ONLY* if they cut the ending out, which

guaranteed the X rating the movie received. Instinctively, Don knew what his audience wanted to see and refused to buckle down to the MPAA's censorship. He and Ralph opted to go with Joe Levine's Avco Embassy Pictures for distribution. While Schain felt he had made a relatively mainstream movie, considering the pure exploitation reputation of the *Ginger* series, he said that critics trounced him more for the conventional melodramatics of *A Place Called Today*. "The critics really ripped the *Ginger* movies to shreds. Some of the critics, particularly in New York, had panned the *Ginger* movies so severely that when they saw *A Place Called Today* they had an opportunity to take it out on it some more. At the time, I was quite upset about the reviews. But at the end of the day – the audience really liked those pictures. And went back to see them, particularly *Ginger*, two or three times."

Including Mr. and Mrs. Sleazoid. *Ginger* was the first movie they rented together from a video store on East 14th Street when they first met. Mr. Sleazoid's bedroom was adorned with the posters from *Girls Are For Loving* and *The Abductors*. And while *A Place Called Today* is entertaining enough as a melodrama, with a unique, authentically grimy portrait of urban New Jersey, what one retains most from it is its shocker of an ending. It's a real doozy, displaying Schain's talent for turning the sex/violence formula that propelled the *Ginger* movies into such memorable cherry bombs.

Parker Riggs' video company Tapes of Terror in Texas generously supplied *SLEAZOID EXPRESS* with the full monty of the *Ginger* movies for our book. For a good time, call on Ginger at www.tapesofterror.com.



Cheri Caffaro, *SLEAZOID* icon,
As we've adored and always known her...

SLEAZOID VERITE

"I dig it I really dig it you know. I feel rather grand sitting here carrying on. People are going to be digging it you know...I'm gonna be criticized, loved or hated what have you. What difference does it make. I am doing what I want to do. And it's a nice feeling that somebody is taking a picture of it. This is a picture I can save forever. No matter how many more times I may goof or be ridiculous, I will have one beautiful something that I own. That I really for once in my life was together. And this is the result of it."

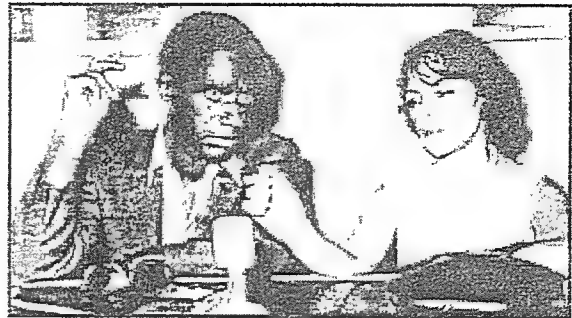
- Jason Holliday

PORTRAIT OF JASON (1967) Director: Shirley Clarke

Portrait of Jason is one of the most important documents of the tenderloin lifestyle and a human being who's survived through it. The Jason of the title is Jason Holliday, a deceptively innocuous looking black homosexual topped off with round thick coke-bottle eyeglasses. He's the original criminally oriented multi-habituated queen on a barstool on Christopher Street singing and fingerpopping along to the jukebox playing "Chances Are" – later picking pockets behind the curtain of the Eros Theater.

Jason drags us drunk and stoned by the collar through his many life scenes. The houseboy. The thief. The bar hustler. The professional sadist who'll piss in your face. The wannabe cabaret singer The ex-con. The flunky. The mental patient. The junkie.

Jason is probably the 33 years he claims, but maybe fibbing about 5 or so years. He's no kid, and all the scenes have built up and he doesn't like what he does. He started running when he was a kid and doesn't know how to stop. He *never* wants to punch a 9 to 5 clock because he knows it's a no win situation and is determined not to repeat it. He wants to fit in, but as a black homosexual outcast sees no way that society will accept him. Jason can't stop being him. The boy can't help it.



Shirley with Jason Holliday, sans his coke-bottle glasses

Jason drinks and smokes joints throughout the shoot, which was shot in a 12 consecutive hour block at Shirley Clarke's penthouse apartment in NYC's Chelsea Hotel. She used free film given to her by an NBC newsman, and the movie had the skeletal crew of Shirley, her assistant, and a friend of Jason's. She uses blurs instead of fade-outs to segue, a metaphor for the chaos of Jason's life. The chaos both drives him manically and makes him miserable – a fact not lost on him.

Jason reveals that he was born under the name Aaron Paine in Newark, New Jersey. He's the product of an aggressive criminal father and subservient mother. His dad was nicknamed "Brother Tough," a preened muscular moonshiner and gambler, the type of parent who brutalizes and bulldozes everyone in his path, including his own family. His mother was considered "a good colored" by whites Jason guffaws. Jason was such a queen from the outset, skipping rope in front of his house, that it would make Brother Tough insane with anger and beat him with a strap. Jason became determined that since his father abused him, he was going to be as evil as possible because it would happen anyway. There's no medium on the gas meter there with those parents. It's either be a criminal or be subservient.

He describes his father's daylong card games in the house and the technique of making corn whisky, with young Jason licking drops of it as a kid. "By the time I was 12 I knew every whore, pimp and bulldagger in the town. And they all said, 'you're queer.' 'I'm queer?' But then I got to enjoy it."

Jason was once told by a schoolteacher friend that everyone has a gimmick in life. Jason has several. Whether he's assisting a whore who's a good tipper and needs some admiration, or working the Disability scam off Uncle Sam, hustling sex, dealing drugs, a little of this a little of that. He says it all comes down to knowing how much you need to get by everyday and making allowances for that. Then staying out of everyone's way.

Jason ruminates on being a houseboy in San Francisco for his friend, singer Carmen McCrae. Jason knows a lot of people on the Jazz circuit and namedrops Miles Davis frequently. Carmen's maid quit on her while she was on the road and she needed another immediately. He got a book out of the library and learned how to do it from that. His mother had taught him to cook. So a little of this, a little of that and he was able to get by. Every time Miss Carmen would come in the house, Jason would get filled with anxiety and hide in the bathroom, which his way of not starting trouble or fucking up. Then one day she went out and he took some speed and cleaned and polished the entire house. When she opened the door, she was shocked out of her mind and quipped "look what you get done when you're not peeing all day, Jason!" Jason punctuates all of his reminiscences with laughter. From the funny to the tragic. Eventually all of these situations come to an end because of Jason's anger. He doesn't want to be anyone's servant in this life. "Don't ask me to dust anything you value. I will break it. Either by accident or on purpose. "

During another houseboy gig, he talks about Aquatic Park in San Francisco that he calls Neurotic Park. He'd drug the lady of the house at 1 pm and she'd be asleep till 4. Then he'd scoot out to walk the dog and socialize and cop some drugs. "The Italians were on one side of the park, the Musclemen were on another, the faggots were on the side, and the dope addicts were in the middle. I was in the *middle*." He laughs. Jason is always laughing at himself. Trouble is joke is always on him, but what else to do? Otherwise he'd have committed suicide long ago.

This particular neurotic honky he'd worked for had driven one drunken husband to the grave and had ensconced the current one in sanitarium to dry out. "And every Sunday I'd go pick up his laundry, he'd give me \$20 and ask 'how is *that woman*. She's *confused*.' And I found out that's the worst thing you can call a rich person...*confused*. That's what the rich call crazy - *confused*."

He's had to endure outrageous discrimination as a houseboy. He's had drunken stoned employers say things like "Ya know I don't usually like niggers, but Jason you're the first one I like!" and "you can come out during the Halloween party, Jason. You'll fit right in with the spooks," as he mumbles "thank you," takes his subservient spot holding a drink and mutters under his breath, "*die you bitch*." Then he tumbles right into a story about getting high on speed and smoking fat joints just to cope with the personalities he works for. Eventually he gets evil and has a friend talk

him into pulling up with a truck when one of his disliked Nob Hill employers is on vacation. Jason and a friend strip the house bare of every stick of furniture it's got. Thoughtfully leaving a note behind saying "I'll be back..." The oldster had a heart attack when he saw what Jason had done to him. "And ya know, I don't even miss him". The camera blurs as Jason shows a hint of shame and wipes his eyes.

Jason then serves us a slice of his nightclub act, which he's been scamming off of for a decade, with no actual act to show for it, which shames him no end. He's had friends give him thousands for the act to get Jason out of the cold and into a profession. Amazingly, even Brother Tough kicked in for the act. When he pulls out the drag props you know *why* he will never be a success. It's a tired old impressions act mimicking Mae West, Butterfly McQueen and Pearl Bailey. Nothing more than getting stoned, tossing on a big black picture hat a waitress gave him and dropping into a few of his favorite scenes from movies. He channels himself through women who loom large in gay iconography, wanting a little too much to be them. He does a scene from Diamond Lil as Mae asking about a portrait she'd posed nude for quipping "just don't hang it over the free lunch counter" - Jason as prostitute. Butterfly McQueen birthing a baby - Jason as a houseboy. The definitive part of his sexual confusion is when he does both male and female roles from *Carmen Jones* - the promiscuous woman and the man who kills her in a jealous rage, then wants to be executed and join her in the afterlife - Jason as schizophrenic.

He sings, and he can sing pretty good. You wish someone would level with him, tell him to drop the drag act and just sing by a piano in an intimate gay bar doing standards. You see if he just stuck to this act and got a cheap little rent-controlled studio apartment, he'd be OK. Jason is pathetically endearingly serious about the act, but then you see why he can't do it. He is acutely anxious and probably became a dope addict to combat the acute anxiety, which many people do. Add a few drinks to that where he doesn't feel the liquor until it's too late and he's on his knees crawling down the sidewalk. His innate infantilism is his downfall each and every time, like a monolith that keeps crushing him.

One of Jason's main gigs is frequenting psychiatrists' office to keep those SSI checks rolling in. He takes a pull on a joint, says that he had six phone calls when he didn't show for an appointment that day and starts laughing uncontrollably. He's disquieted that the psychiatrists find him such an interesting ride and entertaining monologue. It

becomes it's own job keeping the psyches entertained. They want to focus on details on his sex life, which he'd rather forget. He tricks obsessively out of his acute anxiety and need of money. The psychs can only ask how big his johnson is and if he gets compliments on his performance. These homosexual encounters lead to all his conflicts and dramas. Jason is self-aware to know that the psychotherapy hasn't helped him. As he laments, "I've balled my way from Maine to Mexico and don't have a dollar to show for it."

Jason defines many homosexual "types" throughout and gives his read on them. "I met some fabulous people in a stay at Riker's Island" shoplifting drag queens that worked 14th and 3rd as "Miss Kitty Cunt and her friend Louise Beavers." He finds drag queens delusional and living in their own world, good entertainment. What he finds really disturbing is male fag hags – guys who like to hang around gay guys and act as if they're not threatened because their wives won't go with him. He's really at a loss to say what their problem exactly is. He finds them *very scary*.

Where Jason goes trouble follows. After he shows up in L.A he scoots into a YMCA, starts tricking and within minutes is asked to leave. There he was on the street with a suitcase. He goes to the bus station and winds up picking up a white man who worked for the phone company: "Big, blonde, blue eyed, full of muscles, but no brain. Beautiful but ridiculous." He acts as wife to the working Joe, cooking his meals and "giving myself a household allowance," he chuckles. He'd send him off in the morning with a clean T-shirt and sit in the sun drinking cheap wine. Then he starts getting itchy again, sneaking away to bathhouses in the afternoon, where he'd load up on poppers and start orchestrating elaborate orgies. "Some people go art galleries to look at pictures all day. I look at people." The touching thing is that Jason, down deep, really likes people and wants them to like him.

Jason never refers to himself as a "she" though he has a modicum of effete gestures, which he describes as "grandness." He mentions hustling in bars in the East 50s, which is where the affluent male hustler action was in New York at that time. You can see that when he hustles he comes on politely like his mother and when he carries the trick off, he's Brother Tough's son – a completely masculine sadist.

Throughout the movie, Jason comments what a "beautiful thing" is happening by being filmed. Jason is a natural storyteller. He does a great job carrying the film with the natural telling of his life. But the emotional toll adds up. By the time he's talking about

his family, he's squinty-eyed drunk, ditching his highball glass and chugging directly from the bottle of liquor. Someone has finally allowed Jason to show up and be him. It fits the beatnik format of intense autobiography, in which nothing is forbidden and everything is redeemable within honesty. Telling a human story is worthwhile and being a human is enough. After half a day of being intoxicated and talking about the worst aspects of his life – most heartbreakingly, the lack of any honest love in his life – he starts cracking. Even when he does find somebody who genuinely likes him, he'll take advantage or peck at them until they go off on him, just like his father, Brother Tough, did to him. Jason's a classic case of a masochist with fears of intimacy and success.

After 12 hours of this self-revelation, with all his faults laid out, the crew is out of film. Shirley says simply "cut. When Shirley says "the end," Jason says, "it was amazing," with a combination of relief, exhaustion and pride, as if it was the most complex S/M and psychodrama session he'd ever lived through.

What's great about the movie is that Jason has had the courage to try to burn the criminal psychological bridges he has created. He's actually paid for a piano player the first time in his life, and sees a glimmer of hope in the future. It's something he can point to with pride, it's the first non-criminally oriented transaction he's done for himself. The self-expose is his way of trying to say goodbye to the bad part of his life and opening a new door. Although he knows it's sealing his fate as a prowling sociopath, a known quantity in his outcast society. Jason is a genuinely disturbed guy, not just an easily pigeonholed homosexual, with an unimaginable burden of racial prejudice directed at him.

Getting to the next level is not easy in life and people need a bombastic motivator to get to the next level, which is particularly true in the arts. At this time *Portrait of Jason* was made, Warhol and Morrissey were getting all the attention for personality portrait revelation filmmaking, but this film goes deeper than they could ever go. Warhol and Morrissey show superficial drug addiction and sexual quirks – nothing deeper than you'd see at a party. *Portrait of Jason* goes further a hundred fold by actually showing someone's real pain and suffering – their soul.

When *Portrait of Jason* opened at the New York Film Festival in 1967, it was summarily put down by the straight press as nothing but dirty talk, thus validating Jason's feelings about society and how much being truthful in life gets you. All an outcast

needs to become a criminal. Pauline Kael's judgment that Jason speaking was just cheap shocks for the middle class - curious coming from a fag hag who had become pregnant through a legendary gay underground filmmaker, James Broughton. If that's not hypocritical, *Sleazoid* doesn't know what is. Kael's whole being was distasteful to *Sleazoid*. Other critics actually wondered if Jason would get in trouble for his honesty about his illegal lifestyle. Shirley brushed them off with "I don't know. Perhaps he could be lying..." Of course he wasn't. And the miracle of the film is that Jason will live on forever. The film holds up under multiple viewings. With his stories and mirth, Jason turns into an old friend from the tenderloin who comes by for a few drinks and a few joints in his pockets to cheer you up on a broiling hot August night when everything looks bleak. Jason is good at cheering people up.

"Tennessee Williams couldn't have given me any more justice. I mean this is my moment. And I can say anything I goddamn well please. But it's got to be righteous. Oh, this is my chance to really feel myself. And say yeeeeessss....I'm the bitch. Chuckles. Believe it. You amateur cunts take notice. I'm the Bitch."

- Jason Holliday

DERBY

(1971) Director: Robert Kaylor

Derby opens with bleeding Kodacolors of vicious roller derby action. A female derby team manager in a garish blue wig hollers at her avenging players. Ugly women push each other over viciously while flying on their wheels, screaming sadistic threats, promises and taunts at one another. The action here is low class and most of the players pathologically chew gum.

We peek on the women in the dressing room as one grizzler tells a scat joke. The toilet is in the middle of the disgusting dressing room. The focal figure of the movie, Mike Snell, enters the men's dressing room and inquires about a job, telling the male team captain that he can do a handspring. The captain is an older greaser who tells Mike that there's not so much interest in show moves but speed. Mike says he's got that too. The manager tells Mike he'd have to go to a training school. Mike is a thin greaser with prescription Ray Ban sunglasses. The film's

white trash narcissist star. The only value Mike would have to this hungry pack of wolves would be as meat. You study Mike's aquiline nose and count the minutes till it's broken.

The flow of *Derby* is Mike's story intercut with interviews with various pro skaters, all punctuated by p.o.v. shots by a cameraman on skates filming the derby action inside the ring. It's an entire cast of non-actors, all of whom are very good at ignoring the camera.

Mike excitedly joins his wife Christine in the arena and tells her he'd give his factory job a week notice before going to the derby school in San Francisco. The school leads to a derby team, much like pro wrestling. The audience screams at the skaters who yell right back. It's a fight driven sport. Players take their helmets off just to smash each other over the head with them. They punch each other down and stomp each other into submission or until they are pulled off.

Cut to Mike's house. He's asleep in bed with his wife. You see them woken up on a weekend morning by his toddler son in diapers. After some cuddles, the little blonde youngun' screams and waves a stick at Mama while she tiredly whips up some white trash delicacies. Christine pads down the basement steps in a housedress and dirty bare feet to the basement bedroom where her deadbeat brother-in-law Butch resides. Butch, a chubby doughboy, sits shirtless reading *Playboy*. His bedroom is like Scorpio's in Kenneth Anger's *Scorpio Rising*. Every inch of it is submissive homage to macho men, very motorcycle driven. A prominent poster of *Easy Rider* looms over the bed; there's a poster of Cream. It's more than a bit homosexually bent.

Christine, a plain woman with a space between her teeth and long brown hair parted down the middle wouldn't be out of place starring in an *Olga* film. She confronts Butch about some stolen raisins. "Where'd ya hide em?" Butch smirks and keeps reading *Playboy*, pausing to open and contemplate the centerfold. She berates and nags him with her hands on her hips about getting a job. It's a cheap dominance session as she's glaring at him. All that's missing is a riding crop at her side. Butch is so lethargic he doesn't even feed his dog, and she threatens to take it to the pound. He offers to get her a copy of *Playgirl*. She tells him to clean the yard. "It wouldn't kill ya." Butch ends the encounter with a yawn and "what are we having for dinner," even though everyone just woke up.

Mike is finally driven out of bed by his two squalling brats. After tucking his morning hardon into his jeans, he enters the living room with his family, where the roller derby is already blaring on the TV. At the derby, a little old man sells giant phallic balloons. Everyone in the crowd is there to see pure violence and speed. A control room at a TV station presents all different angles of people beating each other up. Mike sits with his wife watching the televised violence. Butch joins them, mouth open like a Neanderthal. They all marvel at a vicious catfight. One fight becomes a free for all, with the skaters even turning on the black referee beating him up in the melee.

The film flip-flops from the girl and guy derbies as if they're one unbroken daisy chain of aggression. The girls rip off helmets and yank each other's hair out wildly. One woman triumphantly holds up a fistful of hair she's torn out of an opponent's head.

Mike visits the local pool hall and announces to two old geezer barflies that he's joining the derby. The popeye half of the duo yaks to himself through the whole conversation; the woman flamboyantly and nauseatingly sports a post-menopausal beard. She boasts an up to date knowledge of the roller derby scene. It's one tough Ohio neighborhood Mike's living in. He wants out. Gotta give Mike credit for *that*.

Cut to New York City's Madison Park, 23rd Street between Park and Broadway. The older greaser team captain reminisces about skating there since he was a kid. He introduces his father and wife. His father looks like a bookie and chews gum. His wife has a severe spit curl that could etch glass. He comments that today's youth doesn't do anything constructive to channel their aggression, they just throw dirt at each other, and he finds that low IQ and pathetic. He disquietedly understands it's a symptom of a larger problem in the country. The lack of wanting to better one self leaves him confused. He reflects on the people who he grew up with, many of whom ended up in penitentiaries. He left Manhattan at 17 for the roller derby. He's grateful his dad allowed him. He remembers as a kid sneaking into Madison Square Garden and is proud that now *he's* the attraction that "people will pay and go through the turnstile" to see – he became the coveted object he used to steal. He's in disbelief that others throw their lives away. He's made it in a tough game and is proud of his grit and determination. After the game, a Ginger Baker type speedfreak with sunken cheeks discusses a loss that the captain's team suffered jabbering a thousand miles a minute.

Mike's foreman in the factory complains that he takes too many days off but does a good job when he's there. A jarhead floor manager comes over to bust Mike's chops complaining that Mike won't wear safety goggles in favor of his prescription sunglasses. Mike lives in a part of Ohio that seems very bleak. Blue Collar and Dead End.

Mike goes for a bank loan, stating that he makes \$147 a week and that his wife makes \$95 a week working in a lounge. He wants the loan to buy a motorcycle to ride to San Francisco with for the derby training. After displaying his financial station in life for the bank officer and the camera, the officer tells him he'll let him know by the end of the day.

A vicious guard dog and a bunch of *Playboy* centerfolds taped to a door introduce a biker selling a motorcycle. He recites a litany of his physical injuries sustained while racing. He has a small tattoo of a heart on his arm. Both he and Mike have early 1960s greaser 'dos. They've stuck to a style. Mike voices fear he'll be killed riding the bike on a highway by a car and the salesman has to reassure him. Mike isn't very vicious. You sense in this passage of dialog he isn't aggressive enough to hang tough in the roller derby scene professionally.

Two fugly derby girls ride to the airport discussing the derby life – everything from broken ankles to superstitions about polishing of skates. They bitch about the audience, other skaters, other women. They refer to their outfits as "monkey suits." Both are white yet possess huge kinky Afros. They chuckle over a soul sister as they refer to a black woman in the audience who thought they were trying to cop a black hairstyle. They marvel that black women bother to straighten theirs. Why bother.

On to Mike the loverman, with eight dollars tucked in his pocket, sneaking around on his wife. He and his tattooed best friend heard of a champagne night on the radio at a bar. They can just pay the door admission and they "won't look so bad" Mike notes. Not spending their dollars on the girls they want to ball is an angle in their cheating game. They tell their wives they are working late. They corroborate stories and tell of nagging and questioning by the ball and chains back at home. Mike's pal is surrounded by homemade collages when he is interviewed on his bed, the central themes being swastikas and *Playboy* centerfolds in curious hillbilly compositions. A Playmate with her arm raised in power fist is juxtaposed with the word "revolution." Glued in. Both he and Mike have boring jobs and make up for

that by catting around town. Mike's friend comments on Mike's habitual womanizing; while he has two or three girlfriends at a time, he marvels that Mike once had five women at once and is only out of gas money to drive to see his cheats. Apropos to nothing, he brings out a gun, claiming it's out of self-defense from drunk hillbillies hassling him in bars. The guy says that he doesn't trust his mother as much as he'd trust Mike.

Mike and his pal go to a cheap titty bar. The old time stripper running the joint shouts at the tramps to "shake those money makers!" She's got a platinum white concrete beehive wig. The gals are a lineup of trailer park trash in everything from negligees to underwear to cheap strip costumes. Flames shoot out of the lips of the stage as a finale, happily startling guys.

Uh oh... out of nowhere, it's the wives, dressed alike for work in striped sleeveless polyester shirts and white shorts. Mike's wife and his best friend's wife are going to get confrontational with one of the floozies their husbands have been balling and sharing. They morosely trudge up a hill to her house. The confrontation has gone on many times. The floozie in pink pants drives by Mike's house and honks the horn, waking up the kids. The skank does nothing but hurt the wives' feelings. She tells them to kiss her ass and get off her lawn. The wives slink away. Sniping over their shoulder about calling the cops if the horn blowing doesn't stop. The slut could care less. She's the type of low self-esteem whore who's proud of herself, especially of her troublemaking.

The speedfreak Ginger Baker type skater is interviewed in a motel room and relates how people think roller derby players are low IQ. His sensitivity is revealed when he admits he didn't finish high school because he started skating when he was 15. "It makes it rough and it's hard to deal with people." It makes him mad. He doesn't like it because people rank on his job, which gives him "sores, bruises, broken teeth, lack of sleep" (in his case from the speed addiction). He says he makes good money at it, though. Then you see him knocked around in the ring, getting beaten unmercifully. He comments that, "it's only a matter of time before I get back at 'em." He feels that his job intrinsically fits his life, that he's able to play out his aggression, anger and displacement in society by taking it out in the ring, that it's a healthy outlet. Yet there's something intrinsically masochistic, like boxing or sex performing, in that the more the person gets hurt, the more they want to come back for more. Reclining on a bed, wearing a black T-shirt and some sharp yellow/black plaid pants, he tells how

overzealous, stalker type fans make the derby girls their sexual focal point by running them into ditches after games to attempt rapes. Guys break into derby skaters' hotel rooms. He shows his "Italian 24 automatic, good for close range. Should I need it."

Mike, wearing a gold satin shirt, and his doughboy brother Butch entertain a Vietnam vet in their living room. The vet says that the damn gooks all wear black pajamas, so you don't know whom to shoot at. Butch whines softly he's afraid to go to Vietnam and doesn't want to get killed. The vet spouts militarisms like "when it's your time to die you're gonna die." Mike thinks it would be a good thing for Butch to go so he'd have a career. Butch asks the vet if he felt bad about killing and the vet answers, "No." "Is that what they teach you there," questions Butch suspiciously. "No they teach you discipline." The Vet snipes back authoritatively and accusationally questions Butch "who got to you? Those Hippies?"

Mike admits that he got married to avoid the draft and beams that he beat the law President Johnson passed by three days. The vet makes it like hippies have brainwashed Butch, as if commies had worked him over. Butch smirks - being called a hippie is a step up from a hillbilly or a faggot fat boy.

Mike's wife chats with her friend in the kitchen as she smokes a cigarette. She says Mike talks a lot about joining the derby and she worries about the money if he left this factory job and it doesn't work out. Otherwise, she's ambivalent about her husband's career choice. Then she spills the key to it all. Mike's father is the roller derby fanatic and has been instigating it all along, so you discover that Mike has been a pawn for him. It's all to please his father, who's dying in the hospital.

If Mike got in the ring the other skaters would make mincemeat of him in five minutes. He's too much of a narcissist; he cares about his looks too much and the audience watching him. It's like tossing a teddy bear to jackals. Mike is almost like an Elvis wannabe. He's sexually athletic but not capable of withstanding physical pain. With his penchant for cheating, Mike would actually be better off doing sex work in loops. His friend the 'Nam vet tries to talk him out of joining the derby. "C'mon, Mike, how long do you think you'll last?" Mike pleads that derby players make "twelve grand a year." The same he makes at the factory without getting a beating notes his friend. Mike wants to be in showbiz and this is the only window he sees open. The vet thinks Mike is delusional and is risking losing what he has. "Look around at all you have" meaning his family and his

life. The vet has seen shit in Nam. He was shot in the hand. He takes life seriously. But it's simple – Mike hates working at the factory and cares little about marriage beyond keeping him out of the Vietnam War.

The top of the line greaser team captain, what Mike aspires to be, shows off the house he had constructed in the Bay Area. He refers to "all the nights of broken bones and having his head beat in" to pay for it. He built his house as a retirement place and goes through all of this to be left alone to enjoy his family, ultimately. Hi wife sits on a lounge chair beaming at him. He's a happy family man.

Mike visits his father in the hospital. The father beams. "I always wanted you to skate."

The female team captain in a blue wig instigates a brutal catfight. Mike couldn't hold his own with one of the girls, for God's sakes. The audience admits they like to see the fights. A little girl about eight, whose grandmother has been bringing her to the derby since she was three succinctly states, "I

like to see the fights." After one vicious fistfight two porky pigs turned on by the violence sneak a smooch, surrounded by little kids jacked up in a frenzy of bloodlust.

Mike calls into work saying he had car trouble so he can hang around a little more at the derby. He looks longingly at the bare rink as the audience rises for the National Anthem. Mike smirks when the announcer says the record's broken. The announcer says "we'll dispense with the anthem" and everyone cheers.

Derby ends with Mike riding to the training school on his motorcycle.

Derby opened in 1971 in New York City. It was an upper east side art house hit, with Manhattanites showing up to peek at how the white trash lived. Lost for several years, the film has now been preserved in a pristine edition by 5 Minutes to Live Video & DVD (www.5minutesonline.com)





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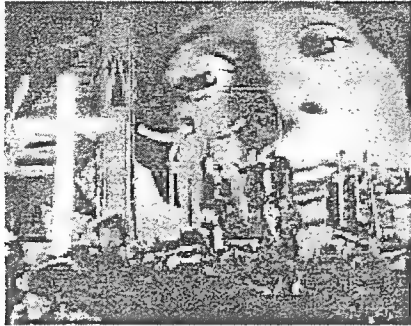
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SLEAZOID

Privileges & Punishments

PRIVILEGE

(1967) Director: Peter Watkins



British director Peter Watkins began expanding the documentary format in the 1960s. Having started his career in advertising, Watkins made a series of fictional films that employ a documentary format, unfolding invented incidents as if they were factual. While set in near future, the films are social commentaries on the contemporary chaotic social and political upheavals at the time they were made.

The first film that gave Watkins widespread recognition was *The War Game*. Originally made for BBC, it depicted the effects of a nuclear war on an unprepared Britain. The film ended up banned by BBC but snagged the 1966 Oscar for Best Documentary.

Watkins followed *The War Game* with his most commercially successful feature, *Privilege*. Universal Pictures released it stateside as part of a program it had at the time of investing in foreign films with boxoffice potential.

Privilege is set sometime in "the future". It opens with a tickertape parade for its hero, pop singer Steve Shorter (the "SS" seems deliberate). A pre-Ziggy Stardust scene shows Bobbies holding housewives, nurses, old ladies, and kids back as Steve's parade passes through like Hitler. A brief interview clip of Steve reveals a very halting, shy fellow stating that, "I'm so glad to be back in Britain after my American tour."

Steve's stage performance is the granddaddy of all punk and an aesthetic influence on many. Iggy Pop, the Sex Pistols, Bowie's *Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders From Mars*, the films *Performance* and *A Clockwork Orange* have all worshipped at its altar. Still photographs of Steve being handcuffed and brandishing his cuffed hands at the camera explain that the act is based on a sentence he once served in prison. And it's made him "the most desperately loved performer in the world."

Inside the auditorium, onstage is an empty cage. Steven Shorter's performance, it is explained, serves the government and society as a release from all the nervous tension that has built up. Steven is led in with a black sheet covering him. A disgusted Bobby throws him down to the stage like a sack of potatoes. Steve's whole act is of suffering. The Bobbies glower hatefully at him and rub their nightsticks phallically. Steve throws his head and body against the bars. The female populated audience scream and swoon in a mixture of sympathy and sexual arousal. At times they resemble Weegee photos of girls in ecstasy at early Frank Sinatra performances. The women, some who have "S" in magic marker on their hands, start chanting his name.

Steve sings:

*My body's all aching
My hands are tied
I need freedom
Not just sympathy
So if you really love me
Set me free...*

... and you're surprised Mick Ronson isn't there, it sounds so similar to the *Spiders on Mars* era Bowie. Very much like Bowie's mime act in the box. Steve is let out of the cage and starts ripping his clothes off. A very typical dowdy bloke housewife starts to understandingly lead him away. A Bobby whacks her and Steven hits the cop in response. As a finale, the girls storm the stage and stomp the Bobbies.

In his dressing room, Steve slumps to the floor. His wrists are bloody. "Professional handlers" rush the dressing room. Cut to Vanessa Richie, who's been commissioned to paint Steven by the Ministry of Culture. Vanessa is played by Jean Shrimpton; her sister Chrissy dated Mick Jagger. Both girls were major Twiggy-level supermodels in Carnaby Street swingin' 60s London. Vanessa wanted to paint him because she finds "a strange sort of emptiness" in him. He portrait of him looks like a misery ridden Francis Bacon portrait.

At a press function, surrounded by dozens of handlers and profiteers, Steve looks miserable. His bald, fat, music publisher holds up a depressed photo of him with Steve and gives Steve a kiss as the flashbulbs pop. They're at one of the Britain's 300 "Steven Shorter Discoteques" which are designed to make people "feel good." Steve looks at Vanessa as he's flanked by people all making a living off of him. His musical director is a proto-Malcolm McLaren, a self-professed anarchist.

Steve dances with Vanessa as his hit song *I'm A Bad Boy* plays. "I'm quite a phenomenon," he tells her - "nauseating, sadistic" - as his pleading song serenades them. She questions him about a girl who said she'd kill herself for him and he says, "She's lovely."

Steve is a one-man MTV. At "The Steve Shorter Dream Palace," its very Warhol influenced, with silver everywhere, aluminum on walls. It's designed to "keep people happy and buying British." At the time *Privilege* was made, the British Invasion in the U.S. was in full force.

Intercut are scenes of a female fan who cut his name onto her hands with razor blades. His handlers discuss treating Steve's injured wrists in the high-tech bathroom.

The music publisher sings a hideous Archie Rice music hall ditty called *Mother*, using drums. The anarchist calls it "a nostalgic breaking of wind - RUBBISH." Steve's administrator, an ad agency type is seen lifting weights, not very well. He mentions that Steve was threatened with a paternity suit a year and a half ago. He arranged for an abortion and paid off the girl with £ 500. He wrote it off to "petty cash."

To ominous music, the bank manager who controls Steve's corporate interests discusses Steve's American tour schedule as "punishing." Steve made 64 appearances in 25 days. "He seems nervous and drawn." Like a hardcore porn performer, since Steve is an earner, they don't want him dead.

At a poolside photo shoot, a paparazzi photographer demands that Steve pose half naked on a diving board and he looks humiliated. He was a chunky guy, weighing in 35 pounds more, before he was put on what a handler describes as a "special diet." Steve's bodyguard checks out Vanessa's art studio as he taunts her. He tries to kiss her and she jams an apple in his mouth.

Steve is used in an apple commercial with people looking like fools in giant apple suits, falling all over themselves. The idea of the commercial is to sell enough British apples before they go rotten. Steve plays a knight in the commercial that bears apples.

Vanessa relates the corporate concern about his nervousness. He suspects she's keeping tabs on him and seethes with anger. She, with her calming low voice, assures him not. She is just worried about him.

The businessmen meet with coalition church-state government and plan a new agenda for Steve Shorter. Two models are brought into the boardroom to exemplify the new commercial trend towards sterility. A bunch of priests watch a Beatles imitation band dressed as monks singing a rocked up version of *Onward Christian Soldiers*.

Steve's handlers and business concerns decide to change his image. They plan to use Steve to boost church attendance. One priest comments that it's easier to use Steven to do it in public than the Inquisition was to do in private. The movie views religion as nothing but another commercial enterprise bringing money into Britain and a way to control the citizens. The sinister stern reverend orchestrating this looks like he'd be wrapped in rubber from head to toe and living with mum at home.

Steve visits Vanessa for a sitting. Her portrait is staring to resemble a Francis Bacon skeleton. He's got a radio watch and it plays his song "I've Been A Bad Boy" she asks him to change the station. It's the same *Bad Boy* song on each and every station. That at least makes him crack a smirk

"What do you do to relax?" she asks him

"I listen to music."

"Always your own?"

"Yes." He laughs, finally.

"What would you do if you weren't here?"

"Sleep and watch children's programs."

Steve's managers claim they have a familial relationship with him, but Vanessa quickly sees that he's not close to anyone. His controllers say he belongs to the public. A press conference introduced by one of Steve's record men introduces the repressed kinky reverend. Steve appears in a red outfit with handcuffs. It's more than an act; those handcuffs are a metaphor of the prison his popularity and image has created for him, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They ceremonially uncuff Steve.

Steve goes to the bank manager and tells him he wants this stopped. The bank manager tells him that the public is unintelligent and that Steve can lead them away from a communist threat into a "fruitful conformity." Except that the major corporations instead of communist controlled governments will be the profiteers.

Steve suffers a breakdown and turns infantile. At a dinner party serving lobster, he asks for hot chocolate. He starts screaming at Vanessa inside a garden hothouse.

Steve is used as the focal point in a large religious event filled with incipient fascist symbols – burning crosses, marching bands. As he's standing behind him, the sadistic reverend addresses the gathering like Hitler. Instead of privately hurting people as they did in the Inquisition, the church is now going to publicly hurt one beloved entertainer to turn everybody into sheep.

People give fascist salutes with British flag armbands. The imitation Beatles puppet backup band plays a Byrds like tune, as the activity crosses over to Steve. Clad in the red outfit, his performance has been twisted into a faith healing rally. His theme song of rebellion has been distorted into a religious anthem. People fall out of wheelchairs towards him.

On the telly it's reported that Steve converted 49,000 people, and he's freaked out. He starts throwing stuff around Vanessa's studio. She says, "we should go away" and he breaks down, crying. As he takes his shirt off, his back is covered in scars – she had assumed that the act was faked – like the dry-humping in softcore – but it wasn't.

"Will you marry me?" he asks her in tears.

"It wouldn't work out. It would have to be on *my* terms. I'm very possessive."

But as we've seen, Steven needs to feel owned.

At a record awards function, Steve is presented of a statuette of himself complete with a music box that warbles. He says, "I'm a person. I HATE you." As Watkins narration puts it: "All Steve Shorter expressed was the fact that he was an individual, and *that* in an age of conformity can become a social problem."

The guests are shocked and run out. Paparazzi dash in and are shooed out by Steven's manager, who attacks Vanessa for instigating Steven to think for himself. The couple attempt to leave and Bobbies have to keep an attackful, angry mob away from them.

The bank manager says that it would very unlikely if Steven could regain the popularity he once had. "Maybe in death he'll be remembered with a sort of nostalgia..."

You assume that Vanessa married Steven and went into seclusion. All that's left after the ticker tape parade that greeted him back to the U.K. a year later is a few old records, and a film clip of him – with the sound removed – a sepia toned black and white clip that we first saw at the outset of the movie in which he introduces himself.

The Steve Shorter story is more relevant today than when it was first showed. Its musical ripples, from Bowie's *Spnders on Mars* to Iggy Pop, are vividly clear. But most anti-nihilist in *Privilege* the love story core between Vanessa and Steve. She catches his eye by simply asking him blunt, matter-of-fact questions while everyone around him is busy minding his affairs, without any concern for his mental or physical well being. When Vanessa gets Steve to assert his individuality and escape from these toxic influences, it's like a girl who's fallen in love with a prominent porn star who finally gets him to turn his back on the physically and mentally punishing work where others exploited him so mercilessly.

PUNISHMENT PARK

(1971) Director: Peter Watkins

Punishment Park opened to generally good critical response at the 1971 New York Film Festival. Sherpix, a distributor known for hardcore hits like Howard Ziehm's *Mona* and *Harlot* picked up the film, but it had difficulty finding a commercial niche and had a it subsequently had a very brief theatrical run. Like many lost films from the early 1970s, it's now gaining an appreciative audience of new film fans through video and DVD availability.

At the time *Punishment Park* was made America was a hotbed of hateful unrest. A bunch of innocent students who were merely staging a peaceful protest against Vietnam War had just been gunned down by National Guardsmen at Kent State University in Ohio. The point was that the

government had gotten sick of these peacenicks and never wanted them to show up at another antiwar rally again.

Enter Brit Peter Watkins, who had commercial success with his faux documentary, *Privilege* about pop singer Steven Shorter, bashing the British idea of collusion of religion and state. *Punishment Park* is another faux-documentary, but its roots are in avant-garde filmed theater, like *Dionysis in 69*, *Futz*, and, mainly, *The Brig*, which takes place in a Marine prison. Like those other films, the movie features realistic settings, performers who lack studio images or affiliations and has largely improvised dialogue. As cinematic as *Punishment Park* is, you're aware throughout that it's a staged performance with specifically typecast performers.

Punishment Park opens with director Watkins, the narrator we hear throughout the film, reciting a 1950s McCarthy-era law, the McCarran Act. Anyone trying to overthrow the government or commit sabotage can be seized and taken to places of detention without trial. Watkins speaks about America's current domestic discord and gives the death toll in Vietnam. A bunch of angry hippies glare into the camera on the back of an open military flatbed truck.

America is trying to get rid of subversive groups, and the prisoners you see are archetypes of Black Panthers, radical poets, folk singers and Yippies. They are given an "emergency tribunal" trial in a tent adjacent to Punishment Park in the desert region of Glendale, California. Punishment Park is used as a training ground for National Guardsmen and a scare tactic against subversives. The defendants are offered a jail sentence or a chance for a 54-mile hike through Punishment Park's desert, pursued by armed National Guardsman, to reach an American flag. The film purposefully intercuts a kangaroo court, the debasement of the victims in Punishment Park, and interviews with both the guardsmen and their human prey.

The defendants have a single lawyer, a disheveled Melvin Belli type, who's largely ignored in his defense of his radical defendants. The members of the tribunal are a venal FBI agent, moral majority creeps ranging from draft-board supporting auto workers to housewives, and a puppet judge. They are the most hypocritical, frothing at the mouth right-wing Nixonoids. A photo of the President Nixon's smiling face leers over the proceedings.

Defendant Lee Robert Brown - a mixture of H. Rap Brown and LeRoi Jones - is described as an "author, broadcaster and militant." He gives the full black radical performance. "I want a jury of my peers, motherfuckers, I want blacks!" A cracker guard grabs him by the mouth and knocks him to the ground.

A deeply sunburned guardsman is precise in his directions to the National Guardsmen who are referred to as the "corrective group". Before they even get going, though, the hippies are dehydrated, exhausted and panting. It's obvious it's going to be a losing battle for peaceniks.

The trials rapidly deteriorate into screaming matches. A Jerry Rubin type does a Chicago 7 recreation being beaten with a nightstick. A Sociology Professor accuses the Yippie of "mental masturbation." The housewife is bitched at everything the Yippie believes in. The autoworker accuses him of being an orgiast. The Yippie honestly tells him that he's been completely brainwashed in a *Roger and Me* indictment against the auto industry. They accuse him of taking drugs and he fires back that napalm is a warfare drug to advance American imperialism. He eventually calls out war, racism and poverty as the sources of the nation's troubles. Not him.

One hippie with revenge on his mind finds the irony that all the radicals will play by the rules in Punishment Park. A guardsman says, "It's just a job, something to be getting paid at." You see the dehydrated and fatigued hippies on the run under the broiling sun. Asked about cops, one says "they're just killers. They've always just been pigs. Street cleaners of the public conscious." A freak type tells us where he's at when he states, "I wouldn't walk around a fucking corner for an American flag, let alone through a desert."

The head guardsman demonstrates the use of several firearms. How you just have "to aim it at a man-sized figure. There's no fancy stuff involved with gunning people down, no shooting the heels off their shoes on nothing." The point is just to fall the runner. Killing them.

Some radicals split from the rest of the hippies and kill a guardsman with a branch from a Joshua tree (a biblical reference). They strip him of his weapons and his shoes. The head guardsman is questioned if the murder will antagonize the police force further. "No doubt about it. Each man is

thinking about how that could have been him." The other guardsmen didn't know the one who was killed. They are not friends. "We're not here for us, we're here for the people who pay the taxes." One guardsman is asked if he's ever killed a man. "Yes I have." His feelings: "None at all."

The renegade hippies are reported as armed and dangerous. It sickens the hippies that violence is going to come into play to save themselves. They look like they could vomit. Some note the rise of violence as a way of coping with poverty, war, minorities, the poor – things get worse and people turn to violence to cope with it.

By now it's 101 degrees. Narrator Watkins reminds us that the normal human body temperature is 98.6 degrees. To climb six degrees more for any extended period means death. In the midday desert sun the temperature ascends to 107 degrees.

One runner says she was charged with assaulting a police officer for trying to get the cops to stop beating her husband. A pacifist says at one time in history it would be an honorable thing to be a policeman or a president, but today the honorable thing to be is a criminal. One draft resister says he's not committed to the revolution, he's committed to sanity.

The pigs roll up behind a group and the hippies scatter. Inside the tent, at the trial of a pacifist about to be dropped into Punishment Park, they tell him that he's got it easy and he's a coward, which is delusional, because he'll be a sitting duck for death soon.

They scoop the runners into the cop cars. To bring them to a location to shoot them out of documentarian camera range. The three days in this particular run of Punishment Park is being filmed by news cameras for public interest purposes.

Some, though, make it to the second day. The late night/early morning temperature drops to 62 degrees and the runners freeze. Meanwhile, Nancy Smith, a pop singer, is put on trial. They mock one of her protest songs. The old crone said her kids had liked her songs – a fact that confuses the old bird.

As a bunch of guardsmen stomp hippies, and shoot them outright, Watkins screams, "We've got this here, on tape for NBC." "I've been on TV before," sneers a guardsman. "Not like this you haven't!" counters Watkins.

In a symbol of Kent State and Lieutenant Calley's massacre of Vietnamese civilians, a freaked out young guardsman soldier is questioned about why he shot at the runners throwing rocks when he knew they were unarmed.

A black radical becomes too much for the kangaroo court, is knocked to the ground and muzzled with duct tape. Longhaired white radical Allison Mitchner, at her trial, says people have become violent when deprived of basic human needs. She says the Constitution promises the right to life, freedom and the pursuit of happiness. And a nation as powerful as America with plenty of resources denies people food and shelter commonly. She says people are denied welfare and food stamps and have to see their children starve. So people have to go out and fight for what they need.

The judge smirks as he notes that the trials have been marked by defendants making outbursts. The one lawyer asserts that all the defendants are Americans with rights and have their lives ahead of them.

The last group of survivors makes it to the flag, which is surrounded by armed guardsmen. They're shot and stomped. The head guardsman turns to Watkins and says, "you try to make out like you're a big goddam humanitarian and all you want to do is show this to your network and put money in your pocket."

Which is strangely accurate, in a way. Despite all of Watkins stated humanitarian aims in *Privilege* and *Punishment Park*, his films remain driven by relentless violence and sadism. And that sadistic impulse is what pulls the viewer in for the entire ride, making his films true cases of film caught between art, humanitarianism and exploitation.

* * *

Both the Peter Watkins movies *Privilege* and *Punishment Park* are available in clear versions from the entertainment company Five Minutes To Live. They are fascinating, maddening movies that are very in tune with fascistic tendencies of the new millennium, as timely as when they were originally released. The company that releases these Watkins films have a great list of rare wonderful films. Check them out at: www.5minutesonline.com

STILL DISGUSTING AFTER ALL THESE YEARS

MARK OF THE DEVIL

(1970/US Release 1972)

Director: Michael Armstrong

Hallmark Releasing was a small Massachusetts distributor that had a pattern of boldly giving the killjoy MPAA the finger. Before releasing its epochal *Last House on the Left* it slapped a phony R rating on. Hallmark made audacious headway by releasing unrated films that nonetheless played a huge amount of theaters, both grindhouse and neighborhood. Hallmark was hooked into American International Pictures' massive distribution network, and was able to profit off the large, lucrative theater chains that AIP had ensconced itself in since Roger Corman's monster movies had played them in the 1950s. It was a certain well trodden successful circuit. One where censors held little power. One where the audience was never let down on their film choice.

In 1972, Hallmark released *Together*, a sex-ed movie that featured brief hardcore segments and the presence of a clean cut model named Marilyn Briggs – pre *Behind the Green Door* infamy – at theaters throughout the New York area. Hallmark managed to get *Together* booked across New York City and the five boroughs in a quickie, *Mom and Dad* derived roadshow manner.

Before going full throttle with *Last House on the Left*, Hallmark's first experiment in ultraviolence, *Mark of the Devil*, was a European import that would have certainly borne the X-rated stigma for graphic sex and violence. Astutely, the company refused to have the film rated, inventively awarding it "V for violence." The ad campaign pivoted on the revolting image of a woman in a scold's bridle about to have her tongue chopped off. To top off the campaign, Hallmark utilized roadshow gimmickry by distributing vomit bags to ticket buyers. Hallmark aptly double billed the film with old, gory AIP witchhunter chestnuts like *The Conqueror Worm* or *Cry of the Banshee*.

Mark of the Devil shockingly still holds up three decades later as one of the most bloody and disgusting of the witchhunter subgenre of horror films. It was produced by Jesse Franco associate Adrian Hoven, who also appears in the film, was directed by an Englishman, Michael Armstrong, who had considerable experience in the horror genre, and

featured a top flight Euroseaze cast including Udo Kier, Herbert Lom and Gaby Fuchs.



The film kicks off as a priest has parts of his fingers amputated, is stripped and tarred and feathered, all the while two nuns are burnt in a pyre. Udo Kier plays the assistant to the witchfinder, Herbert Lom. You know Kier's character is a fundamentally decent guy when he rescues a voluptuous waitress at the local inn (Fuchs) from yokels who want to accuse her of witchcraft.

When Lom arrives, all hell literally breaks loose. Lom sets up a torture chamber designed to extract confessions from the populace. The movie quickly becomes devoted to seeing bloodied fingers put in presses, water torture, people in pillories being forced to sit on needles, and various decapitations. The movie also employs inappropriate use of child actors. A mother with her two small children is

imprisoned in the torture chamber and Lom lets her out, only to graphically rape her.

Kier lets his girlfriend slip out of the dungeon and she rouses the captured into turning against the witchhunters. In the tragically nihilistic conclusion, they misidentify Kier as one of the villains, string him up and kill him with a belt equipped with spikes. While the townspeople have rid themselves of the depraved, murderous antagonists, they've inadvertently killed the hero, leaving his girl weeping at the conclusion.

What is remarkable about *Mark of the Devil* is that the torture chamber and contraptions are real and taken to the extreme. And it's a terminal, blood-drenched extreme. Director Armstrong executes the movie with a requisite amount of style and skill. His camera placement is consistently intelligent, and the period settings and costumes are convincing for a change. What's most surprising is that after three decades, *Mark of the Devil* has lost none of its ability to shock, repel and nauseate.

NIGHT OF THE BLOOD MONSTER (aka THE BLOODY JUDGE) (1970)

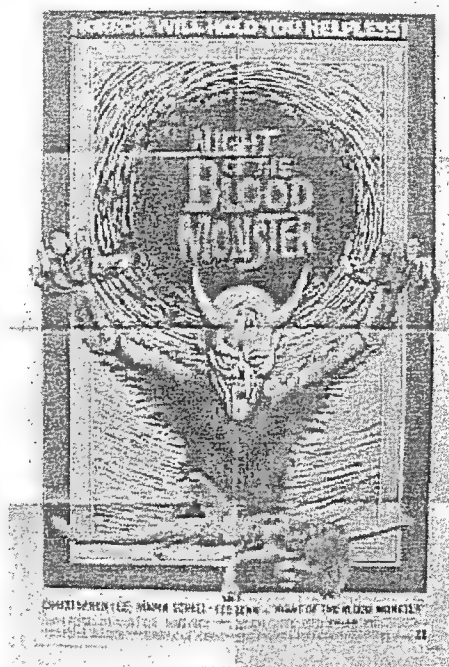
Director: Jesse Franco

When Mr. Sleazoid was a pre- and early adolescent, he lived in an apartment complex with a large population of latchkey girls whose parents had no eye on their kids' whereabouts from the early morning until about midnight, especially during the summer months. As long as they were in the hallway, the parking lot or in the general vicinity of the apartments, their parents thought nothing of it. Perpetually clad in T-shirts, denim cutoffs often decorated with silver studs in the shapes of hearts and stars, hot pants or dungarees. They staunchly refused to wear any footwear from early spring until shoes became a physical necessity in the late fall months, when they'd return to parochial school. A nucleus of three sisters formed the inner circle, and they had many friends and associates.

Youngman Sleazoid's closest distaff pal was a Cheryl Smith lookalike blonde, the youngest of the three sisters, who completely disregarded any adult authority figures. She either ignored older people who found her pesky, slammed doors in their faces or flipped them the bird. This girl enjoyed spending a lot of her private time with Youngman Sleazoid. They had both accumulated a library of old *Playboys* behind the dryers in the laundry room, which they'd peruse together in the early evenings. As well as checking out newspaper ads for then-current adult

movies like *Guttertrash* - "that looks like an interesting one, Bill." This mutual voyeurism would inspire them to think of various kinky victim/victimizer "games" to act out.

In one memorable instance, this girl led him to an apartment that squatted above from a local bar across the street from their apartment complex. She was friendly with the girl who lived there, whose parents were conveniently out. Tending bar no less, or getting drunk themselves. The resident girl broke out the meticulously kept *Sunshine and Health* nudist magazines that her parents were so very fond of. Suddenly, a panicked but aroused Youngman. Sleazoid saw sixteen youthful female eyeballs absorbing his reactions in unison.



AIP's monster slanted campaign for Franco's film

At this time, local stations like Channel 5 and Channel 9 would run "Creature Features" late Saturday nights - films like the John Ashley S&M Filipino horror movies like *Brides of Blood* and curious imports like *The Brain That Wouldn't Die*. These Creature Features were always a tad more explicit than network TV, sometimes featuring brief glimpses of nudity like a frightened female in filmy negligee that made it past a snoozing censor's scissor. Or a metal contraption containing an actress would provoke the girls to ask, "do you think she's naked under there, Bill?" At about 11:00 p.m. on Saturday night, Youngman Sleazoid would stick his head out his apartment door and say to the girls hanging in his hallway, "hey, Creature Features is gonna start, hurry home before it starts on TV. Tell me what you think

when we see each other tomorrow." Sometimes they'd bang on his apartment door to watch the show with him, although Youngman Sleazoid's parents were always depressingly present. That would always lend a pall to the viewing.

One frequent replay was Jess Franco's *Night of the Blood Monster*. The title was misleading. It was a witchhunter import with Christopher Lee, under a powdered white wig, doing his villainous histrionics as Britain's notorious witch-hunting judge, Jeffries. Maria Rohm stars as the heroine. A stunning blonde, she's in many of Franco's movies and is the wife of the film's producer Harry Alan Towers. The movie kicks off with a bunch of girls making a mock-up doll of him, dancing around it by a campfire. Of course, they're arrested for witchcraft. The heroine's sister is tried and burnt at the stake, in part because Maria refuses Lee's oily advances. Maria and her boyfriend flee to the countryside, only to be recaptured by Lee's henchmen, who link them together by the neck in a chain gang and drag them back under the whip back into the torture chamber. Just in time, there's a revolt, and Jeffries is brought to justice, getting a dose of his own medicine.

The interior expository sequences are blaringly overlit. Even though AIP edited the movie down for a PG rating, the scenes of the women led together in chains and getting flogged show where Franco's head is and always will be at. And there were the cuts in the TV version of this film were minimal.

Needless to say, *Night of the Blood Monster* provided quite the conversation piece the following morning with Youngman Sleazoid and his female bunch when they all met the next morning on a bench in front of the apartment building. A lively cinema klatch started. These girls provided his first rapt audience for his film criticisms. He praised the movie, then enjoyed having the girls recap the events of the film exactly the way *they* interpreted them. Little did they know that Youngman Sleazoid was imagining *them* as the women in the film in the variety of its sadomasochistic situations, with their description of the events only enhancing his fantasy image party. His closest gal pal and *Playboy* co-curator complained that the title was deceptive. "Bill, I didn't see *any* monster in that one, but I the movie was still pretty good. At least it made sense. Not like that *Mondo Cane* thing you got me to watch last week." True to her sensibility, she was not shocked by Franco's film or offended by its S&M content.

Shortly after *Night of the Blood Monster* played on TV, *Mark of the Devil* opened. Its graphic ad made Youngman Sleazoid and his gal pal both curious. But the movie played far from their home, in a slum neighborhood enveloped by projects. So they had to rely on a description of it from one of her older sister's girlfriends, who had seen it on a date. The retelling only made the movie seem more extreme and made them even more intrigued....

So from grade school on, Mr. Sleazoid has always had girls beat a path to him because of his offbeat cinema choices. The cherry on the cake being Mrs. Sleazoid.

* * *

Cinefear Video offers a clear copy of this piece of Jesse Franco kink. It has the added bonus of all the torture chamber S&M scenes AIP cut from the theatrical print for the PG rating at the end. Check out this company for its variety of offerings, from classic exploitation, Andy Milligan and rare music performances. They're on line at www.cinefear.com.

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GIALLO QUICK TAKES

BLOODBATH

(1973 Spain/1979 US Release)
aka LAS FLORES DEL VICIO

Director: Silvio Nazzizano

Bloodbath is an entertaining giallo where expatriate performers Dennis Hopper and Carroll Baker appear as salty exaggerations of themselves. The movie begins ominously, with a young blonde girl with strange religious powers is carried through a Spanish village that looks like Greece. Dennis does an extreme star turn as Chicken, an artist who has difficulty separating reality from fantasy. Dennis appears at his most infamously wasted throughout the movie. He's in the midst of a drug blackout that isn't faked and is shown shooting up on several occasions. From his behavior and disheveled appearance, it's believable that the drugs he's taking are real.

To kick the action off, a black woman tourist visits Dennis after he's gotten off, his needle and bent spoon lying on the floor of his shambles of an art studio. He violently smashes raw eggs into her face and forces her to sing "Shortnin' Bread" for him while he's high. Soon after that, she's found dead in a slaughterhouse, her corpse hanging upside down next to dead animals.

Aged ex-babydoll Carroll Baker appears at her most decadent and pharmaceutically addled, playing an ex-movie star. She sits posed and stoned in her furs in a Rolls Royce stalled on a beach. Before long, she's sitting in a bed with a gigolo, nude save for her mink stole. Carroll proudly shows him her photo album containing highlights from her career in a sequence that personifies pill deinstitution. Dennis then climbs a tower, shoots up and has hallucinations of World War II aerial gun battles in his fried brain.

Bloodbath doesn't make a heck of a lot of narrative sense, but who cares. It delivers the raunch in spades, touching upon heterosexual kink with the dash of tabasco being the proliferation of queens that the film utilizes in the manner of perverse chorus boys. Director Silvio Nazzarino has made everything from giallos to such mainstream mod-era fare as *Georgy Girl* to the obscure, male nudity permeated screen adaptation of Joe Orton's play *Loot*, which a young Mr. Sleazoid saw with his startled parents. *Bloodbath* is definitely worthwhile if you're a fan of Hopper and Baker at their most desperate holding their own in a foreign land.

THE NIGHT EVELYN CAME OUT OF THE GRAVE

(1971 European/1973 US Release)

Director: Emilio Miraglia

The Night Evelyn Came Out of the Grave had an all too brief run New York in 1973 before becoming fodder for Creature Feature. A high school aged Mr. Sleazoid caught it as a teenager, and was made a little more than uncomfortable by his identification with the S&M addled hero.

After the titles roll, the protagonist is seen trying to flee a mental institution, only to be restrained by the guards at the gate. Flashback or flashforward; it's not really made clear, as the film was pared down considerably from its original running time and it's virtually impossible to get an uncut version of it.

Our hero lives on a vast estate that also houses the tomb of his dead, red haired wife, Evelyn. He has episodes in which he picks up hookers, ties them to elaborate bondage contraptions, whips them, and murders them. His shrink later asks him, "how have the attacks been again?"

He throws a wild party and hooks up with a new lady who seems willing to accommodate his kinky needs. Then she conspires with other people with an interest in his estate to drive him bonkers. Eventually she stages a scene to spook him out of sanity where his late wife Evelyn rises out of the grave, just as in the title.

As he's about to be declared insane and the villains get their hands on his loot, he fights them off, giving the girl a poisoned drink, and putting another son of a bitch in a pool which he's filled with acid. That creep runs out of the pool screeching like a loon. Just in time for the police to arrest the conspirators and let the hero go back to enjoying his kinky lifestyle.

What is disquieting about the film is its connection to sadomasochism and mental instability. If you're inclined in that direction, that's what will give you the willies about the movie, more than its horror histrionics. It's chaotic but always fun, featuring such Eurosex sexpots as Erica Blanc fleshing out the background.

Both films are available from the large Eurosleaze library of Video Screams.

VINTAGE DYANNE THORNE

POINT OF TERROR (1971)

Director: Alex Nicol

Point of Terror is one of the better Crown International movies. Crown was a more threadbare AIP. They released some entertaining sleaze in the early 1970s, like the catfight classic **Policewomen**, but they have some truly awful movies in their repertoire, like the hideous **Dr. Minx** with a very burnt-out looking Edy Williams. Post Russ Meyer. Marriage to Meyer can do that to a girl.

Point of Terror originally opened on a double bill with another Peter Carpenter vehicle, **Blood Mania**. The title and campaign for **Blood Mania** would lead you to believe that it was a blood horror movie; instead it was a semi-softcore item about a doctor being blackmailed for performing illegal abortions. **Blood Mania** made it on to local New York late night TV in a truncated, nearly incoherent version.

Point of Terror is far more entertaining. It's Peter Carpenter's second role opposite *Sleazoid* icon Dyanne Thorne. A year earlier, in his film **Love Me Like I Do**, Peter and Dyanne played a feuding swinger couple. In **Point of Terror**, her fangs are visible and it's no surprise this lady went on to incarnate Ilsa.

Point of Terror opens with the protagonist, Tony Trelos (Carpenter) performing his bad imitation Tom Jones act at a seaside drunk bar called the Lobster Club. He's got an orange shirt with spangle fringe swinging off the arms. Very *Sleazoid* Las Vegas. Later, while Tony nods on a beach. He's awakened by Andrea (Dyanne), who reminds him that it's *her* private beach - but she gives him the come-on anyway. Andrea is saddled with a nasty, wheelchair bound husband who runs a record company, and Tony has a plain Jane girlfriend that he shares a furnished down at the heels room with.

Tony's determined to go where the money is - Andrea, who could put out his record and keep him. The roots of his pathology are revealed in a flashback to when he was a shoeshine boy. His mother was a prostitute. "I guess I was the only guy she ever trusted." He confides to his girlfriend. She'd give him the money to hold so she wouldn't get stuck up by the twisted johns. Young Tony goes to a carnival, where he's spied by an evil, stocking capped, acne-faced punk. He wanders around the cliffs near the beach, a deserted area his mother warned him never to venture to. Sure enough, the punk follows him and chases him down for the cashbox holding his mother's earnings.

Andrea and Tony have a poolside lovemaking encounter. But Andrea's bitchy crippled husband sees it all, and threatens never to release Tony's record. Shouting "Toro" like a bullfighter, Andrea taunts the old fart until his wheelchair rolls into the pool. She enjoys watching him drown.

Andrea's daughter Helayne arrives back from Europe for her father's funeral. In that competitive mother-daughter way, they've never gotten along. Sure enough, Tony falls for Helayne, and they have a Tijuana marriage. Of course, Andrea is livid. Drunk and stoned on barbiturates, she begins threatening Tony, saying that she's blown Helayne's inheritance. Tony picks her up, twirls her around and flings her to the rocks below. He returns to his furnished room to gather his paltry belongings, only to be shot to death by his plain Jane girlfriend.

A detective writes off Andrea's death as accidental due to intoxication. The twist ending finds Tony screaming on a beach, coming out of a nightmare, only to be greeted by Andrea. Was it all a dream... or is it just about to happen?

Point of Terror is entertaining early 70s sleaze. But most importantly, it establishes Dyanne Thorne as one of the first female villains in film, a persona she kept upping the ante on until she became immortalized in viewers' minds as **Ilsa, Nazi Dominatrix**, the Queen of torture. Long thought lost, *Point of Terror* is available in a very clear copy through Video Screams.

DYANNE THORNE AND HUBBY HOWARD MAURER INTERVIEWED

by Michelle Clifford

Mrs. Sleazoid chatted with Dyanne Thorne and her hubby, Howard Maurer. Dyanne is actually a quiet woman who is more than happy to allow her husband to take the lead. Together they form a dynamic duo.

Sleazoid: How did you first become involved with acting?

Dyanne: I started out at NYU in journalism. My family was not happy with me joining showbiz. But my mother was an absolute angel. She's gone now, but a total angel and she was all for supporting *anything* that would make my life better. So it was what I wanted. I had total support in that area. I don't want to get too much into the past, but at some point the finances weren't there to complete my education. I dropped out of school and found I was making more money singing on the weekend to pay for my college education than I would ever ultimately make in journalism. So I started singing full time and then started studying acting with Stella Adler and Lee Strasberg. These were my teachers. And they encouraged me all along the way.

But my choices were based on - you know, there's a road show gonna open next week and you have a good role but you have to accept the job today and you have to go to Buffalo. You'll be there for six months and if I didn't have money for the rent, go to Buffalo and take that job. So like all actors, you find a way to work your craft. And stage work turned into comedy. And through comedy I became a comedienne. Not a stand up comedienne, but what they call a sketch artist. Not traditional burlesque, but in revues like with Vaughn Meter, in Greenwich Village. He did *The First Family* album. Rene Taylor was in that show. At the Duane Hotel. Vaughn had gotten into some trouble there with his profanities, and we'd come in to rehearse while the club was closed. The show opened and it was a smash. But the club got into trouble, after having had Lenny Bruce there the week before, so another lawsuit came at them for this show. I came to work for the show one night and the club had closed. And that was the end of that show. But that was the kind of thing that could happen.

Then Minsky did a thing at the Silverman Theater in New York that wasn't a nude show, but a big variety show. They had five different comedy teams there and I got to be a sketch artist with every one of them. I was jumping from sketch to sketch, from persona to persona. It was wonderful because I had a real ability for that. I loved that and it just suited my nature. Then I did a Pinter play at the Booth Theater. So I was back and forth between the heavy drama or the comedy, with nothing in the middle. But I was very fortunate because comedy has been very good to me. The reason I try to stay away from the word burlesque a lot is because of what the average person thinks - I was *not* a dancer. They think, "Oh, you were a stripper." I did do burlesque, but it was on Broadway.

Then I went to Los Angeles. I did some TV, a summer comedy relief show very much like *Mad TV* is now. With Loman and Barclay, it ran the whole summer. They were radio people then who had a shot at television. Then I did a series called *The Honeymoon* with Mary Ann Mobley. Those were all comedy things. I got a lot of one-shot roles. Detective stories. But I could see it wasn't going anywhere.

I had been working steadily and I was never good at anything else. I spent several days trying to be a waitress, I never lasted but an hour or two. I worked at a few department stores but that never worked out but for a few days before they'd send me

home (*laughs sardonically semi-embarrassed*). And so really and truly, that's when I stuck to my field, acting. And then, after a point, I wasn't ever out of work. I was going out on the road then I realized that TV was not what I wanted 'cuz I'd say five words and then it was over. The money was good, but when I went on the road I got to do *Cactus Flower*, *How to Succeed in Business* -- I got to play those roles that were a lot more fun, even though it might be where no one noticed them. My goal was to be a working actress. My idea was to do the work and do it well. The best I can and don't listen to other people's opinion of it. My cat just walked over the phone. Black as coal and with a curiosity to match my own. Hahahaha

Sleazoid: What was your first film?

Dyanne: *Who's Was That Lady* [a 1961 comedy with Tony Curtis] was done in New York. My first role and it was very small. The thrust of my career has been on the stage, but the attention I get always centers on a few of my films

There was a film I did years ago, perhaps the very first one where I had a major role, called *Encounter*. I play this really awful wicked person who killed my husband. In the film I marry an older guy for his money and Robert DeNiro plays my stepson. In the credits, it says "little Bobby DeNiro". Who knew I'd grow up to be *Ilsa*, and he'd grow up to be Robert DeNiro?

In 1970 I did *Pinocchio* [*The Erotic Adventures of Pinocchio*]. It was meant to be a satire, and they put added scenes in it. There were no nude actors, nobody was naked in it, but they wanted an X after the fact to get it played and they added certain scenes, because nobody would distribute it as an R. It couldn't get bookings. But it was fine, well done, Carey Allen, who won an Emmy later, directed it. Chris Warfield is gone now, but he was the producer. Chris Warfield was an absolute prince. He went blind later. A brilliant man and just a nice, nice man. He made life good. He let me have designer clothes. At that time I was doing three shows a night in Vegas and was getting off stage at 3:30 quarter of 4. I would go home and sleep for an hour and then I would go catch a flight to Los Angeles to work on *Pinocchio*, and he would meet me at the airport take me to the set and I would work until 3 in the afternoon and then they would take me back to the airport get on a plane, come back sleep for a few hours, slept on the plane both ways and I would be there for my 9 o'clock show. At the Aladdin Hotel. Those were really, (*laughs*) when you think about it, the hours, like 20 hour work days. But I think any performer knows that you thrive on it. But those films are few and far between.

Point Of Terror came at that same time (1970) and *Love Me Like I Do*. Peter Carpenter was wonderful. Up until *Point Of Terror*, before I did any of those other films, men had always been the villains. There was never an opportunity for a woman to be a villain, unless it was Joan Crawford, and *she was just a bitch*.

I was always the one pushed out of the window, or I was the one doing the pushing. It's just comedy to me and I really enjoy doing it. And the irony is that is, *Ilsa* was so really anti-culture that no one found it the least bit acceptable. I was so vulnerable to criticism. Then the future made it emulated.

Sleazoid: How did the first *Ilsa* movie come about?

Howard: Well, she came home with this script, and she showed it to me. She wasn't there when I read it. I didn't like it so much I rolled it up and threw it against the wall! I was angry!!! And then I started to think about it...and said *somebody's gonna do it*, so what? What's the big deal on it? And the more I looked at it, the more I thought it was actually

funny in a morbid sense (*laughs*). She finally agreed to do it. And that was how the whole thing came about.

From there, once it became a hit, when they approached her on the second one, I said, "you better find yourself an agent to negotiate this thing." And no one would come back at her after all these calls she made. So I said, "ya know, what? I've been agenting myself for years." I put the first and second (*Ilsa* film) deals together, and the third. I put the money together, I put the points together, I put the percentages together she got. And actually we did very well on the films. It was amazing, that when one contract was signed, and it was talked about in the trades, suddenly all those agents she called suddenly called back. We told 'em it was too late. The deal was done.

Dyanne: But they wouldn't represent me on anything in the future, 'cause of that original stigma of the SS thing. It's ironic how people are even in this business. They can't separate the character from the person. I felt it was held against me.

I never made an attempt to glorify my character in any way. I read a great deal about Ilsa Koch, who really did exist... and she truly was someone nobody would want to emulate. And so in preparing that character, every character is of course, a human being... You have to give them some humanness. But I didn't try to glorify because I didn't want anyone to think it was something they were supposed to emulate. So, I think I did a good job of that because I still receive a great amount of fan mail.

The film didn't cause any trouble personally, because as I told you, we're people very much involved in stage work so I continued. I've never been out of work as an actress, so that's a blessing. But it *was* the end of considering doing any film work. Film work was totally over to me as a result of it. And the irony of that is that the very company in Canada that produced it decided they were going to do other kinds of films. They were going to use the profit from the *Ilsa* films to bankroll more films and would not put me into any of them because they didn't want the association. A lot of production people chose to work behind the scenes and bring in front people.

Howard: For me it was the introduction to film. I found it fascinating. I remember thinking how do people work that long and still keep the creativity? Big pictures have about a hundred guys doing what four did on a low budgeter. A hard working crew and actors that paid off. When it came to an end, there was no animosity. There were no scenes of that nature making the *Ilsa* pictures.

Definitely strange stuff went on with extras a lot on the set. They were just so happy to be there 20 hours a day! (*laughs*). There was one girl where quite a gory scene went down – and this was all done with prosthetics. She was told to wear the prosthetic arm to get cut off, and she fainted when they cut that prosthetic arm off. Then there was an auction scene [in *Ilsa Harem Keeper*], on the auction block where they're auctioning off slaves, and one girl after the scene was over, she became a little bit... they didn't get enough money for her! On the auction block! (*laughs*). She took it seriously! The girl went bonkers! (*laughs*). In *Ilsa Harem Keeper of The Oil Sheiks*, I played one of the oil sheiks. I was one of the guys sitting at the auction. The girl who got mad, that was the girl who has her teeth knocked out. I'm in that scene. That Sheik who bought her was my cohort.

I gotta tell ya, the actresses were terrific. Neither I or Dyanne - I don't think there were ever too many words between any of them. They just came in and were stone professionals. They came in, did the jobs. There were no complaints. I've since been on sets and seen worse go down in 5 minutes. David Friedman wasn't on the set. He walked away from everything. Ya know when he came back? Just as soon as he started making money.

Sleazoid: Did Spalding Gray play El Sharif in *Ilsa Harem Keeper*?

Howard: Yup.

Sleazoid: Why is he wearing all that makeup?

Howard: He didn't want anyone to know it was him! (*laughs*).

Dyanne: That chastity belt thing was the perfect example of how they changed things post-production. They were just going to show chastity belts in the shape of a heart with the door opening. As it was sold and sold and resold to video companies, that's when they started in with the close ups of the... *female area*, that were not of the original people.

Sleazoid: How did you and Howard meet each other?

Dyanne: We had each had a total life before we met one another. I had been primarily a stage actress out of New York, then went to California. When I met my husband, I was in Los Angeles and had a comedic act with another gal. We were set for Harrahs in Vegas and we needed some new material. This is about 1974. I had not made any of the *Ilsa* films yet. I had done *Point of Terror* already. We were told for our Harrahs show to find a writer. She knew a man named Howard who did writing. The thing is, she had told me a long time beforehand, that he was right for me. And she told him the same thing. And it scared the hell out of me. She was always telling me how right we were for each other. So, we were reluctant to meet, as a matter of fact. Howie?

Howard: I didn't have a clue as to what she was. What happened was, one night I was in New York working in a club, and one night they magically appeared. Dyanne was introduced to me. Where my brother and I were working. Her friend introduced her with "This is the girl I told you about" and that's the girl I've been with ever since. She's beautiful.

Sleazoid: Love at first sight?

Dyanne: No, I don't think so, because I went out on the road after that. We met on the pretext of a professional relationship. Then, when I went out on the road Howard and I corresponded for a year.

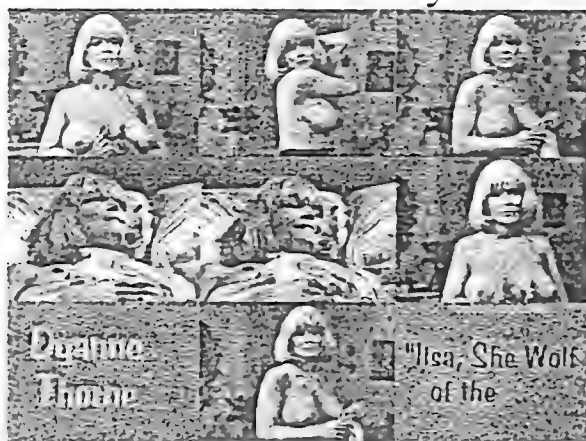
Howard: Maybe a little more than a year. We both went our separate ways, and when we finally got back together we decided to get married. We were tired of writing letters and making phone calls. So, we got married in '75.

Dyanne: When I came off the road we started to see each other. And we never saw anyone else again. Our anniversary is April 20th (*Hitler's Birthday*).

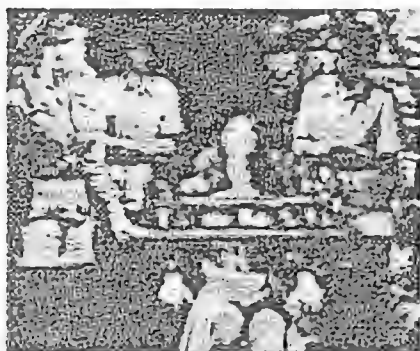
Howard: Just prior to getting married...

Dyanne: ... that's when I got that *Ilsa* script. I had an agent. It was the last agent I would ever have, because once I did that no film agent would touch me again. The agent who was handling it retired after, but it was through that agent, and I went in, and the rest is history. I went in. I wasn't gonna do it. I was going to stay home, and philosophically it made me kinda sick. And then I started to look at it. The truth was I had to face a couple of facts. One is that this is a role an actress doesn't get to play very often. And somebody is gonna do it. Howard said that was his quote. Ha ha. But really and truly (*laughs*) I had no admiration for the *Ilsa* character. But as an actress it is not my job to *judge* the character. My job is to do the part. So I abided to doing this. And I was offered very good money. Then the more reluctant I was the *more* money they offered.

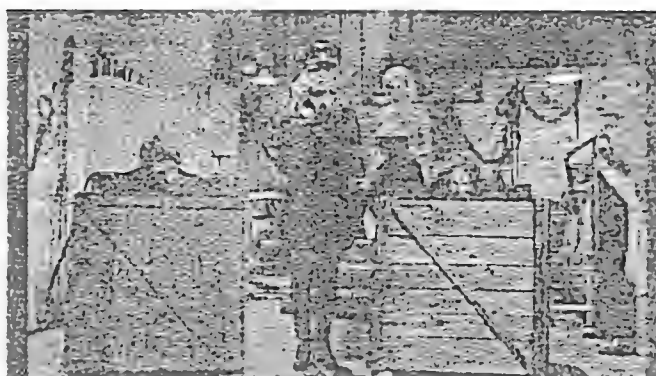
A Dyanne Thorne Gallery



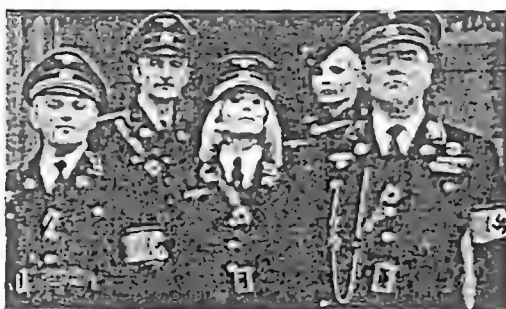
Early pin-up Thorne



Ilsa puts Haji in the tit press in
Ilsa Harem Keeper of the Oil Sheiks



Ilsa and her assistants prove that "a well trained woman can withstand pain more than a man" (Sharon Kelly, right)



Dyanne in full Reich Girl regalia



Sharon suffers under the whip



Dyanne and Howard's wedding service



Training one of the "toys" in *She Wolf*



While Ilsa/Greta takes a leisurely bath...
(What is IN those things, anyway?)



Abbie (Tania Dusselier) is
determined to locate
her sister Rosa!



She is stripped and hosed by
the sadistic guards...



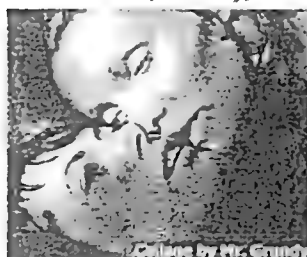
...Then she is stripped and explored by her
fellow inmates, led by the "head bitch,"
Juana (Lina Romay).



Juana orders poor Abbie to
wash her "culo"...



What kind of a culo-washer are you,
sister? I'll teach YOU! (Ahh... the
obligatory women-in-prison calftight.)



Along the way, Abbie gets a lesson
in lesbian love from the resident
"transsexual"...



She finally falls into the clutches of the wicked
warden...huh? Did Ilsa say she was going to
inject Abbie's womanhood with ACID?



...Omgod! Once you get the
patented pop-eyed Ilsa "look,"
you know you're in for it!



Rosa makes a break for it!



Naked and vulnerable, she
dashes through the jungle...



Her appetite is for freedom, but
she is also fed lead!



Losing blood, she finds her
way to Dr. Arcos
(Director Jesus Franco!)



Regaining consciousness...oh, not
is it a nightmare?



What's the psychotic, wicked
warden doing here?



Ilsa/Greta (Dyanne Thorne)
confers with the protesting doc;



Poor Rosa is to be whisked away to the
hellhole from whence she came!

And even that after the first one, before I even realized .. *Variety* came out with a double page spread. – LARGEST GROSSING! So I knew that *Ilsa* was a success but there was no talk of a second. So I went off to do stage work, *Norman is That You* and *The Happy Hooker*. I was in there 11 months. Then, when that show started to close, that's when the second *Ilsa* was offered.

Sleazoid: Howard, here she is, and she's ILSA!! Is that great or what? What was that like seeing her as that full blown?

Howard: Well, I tell ya I always see her as Dyanne. Ilsa was actually the antithesis of Dyanne. Like anything else it was all very natural (*laughs*).

Sleazoid: It was fun?

Howard: Yes! It really was.

Dyanne: I don't know why, Michelle, you just appealed to me because I swore I would never do another interview. Sometimes people think I'm this dominatrix, (*laughs*) but...

Howard: Put that whip down! (*laughter*)

Sleazoid: Any plans for another *Ilsa* movie?

Dyanne: You just want to see me as an old lady!

Sleazoid: But the point of the *Ilsa* character is that she *can* age.

Howard: Right now Ilsa and I are at the gym every day and she looks great! At least once or twice a month people will call and ask why she hasn't done another *Ilsa*, film bringing it up to date. And quite honestly, I don't know why someone hasn't come up with the money for that. When it's such a natural. I don't think they realize how many people are out there. First of all there are people out there making lots and lots of money on *Ilsa* product. But in order for this to take place, number 1, it would have to be a complete reversal of what it was in the beginning. She'd have to have complete approval of any kind of script, the money would have to be waaaay up there for her to play it again, and even then, we don't know if she'd want to do it. Maybe for a hoot if everything was right and in place. But certainly not the way it was because she doesn't have to. And there are so many people out there who want to meet her, I mean I could make a phone call, and book her all over the world for public appearances. One after another. She doesn't even want to do that very much.

Dyanne: And why don't we want to do it? Tell her what we do now. Such fuuun, Michelle. Such fuuunnn.

Howard: Well, we're both ministers for many years. This is PRIOR to *Ilsa*. And we have established a wedding service. We marry people.

Dyanne: In the outdoors, very unique. But as you can see here...My husband is an heir to the Austrian throne. He's a very successful songwriter. He's had number one hits in several countries. And he was co producer of one of the *Ilsa* films and he also co produced with me shows that I've put on here in Las Vegas. Now we share our own business. We've always been ministers. But we have taken that out to doing beautiful outdoor weddings at this time. And that's our current project.

While doing stage work, I traveled a lot and that's when I started studying for the ministry, having gotten my degree in Theater Arts. I decided I'd study the ministry

while on the road instead of being lonely hanging out in bars or something. I just went to whatever local college or university was and took a class. Those class credits started adding up. So when I settled down again later on, I was able to get my degrees.

Howard: We do this all the time, we're ordained ministers.

Dyanne: Lights, music, the entire ceremony. We go to mountains. We take the keyboards up and it's wonderful.

Sleazoid: Do people seek you out for you to marry them because of being *Ilsa*?

Dyanne: No, not really. They don't know.

Howard: But two people came to us who knew, one came in from Europe and one came in from New York. And, yes, we did marry them. It was wonderful. And we never stop getting offers for her to do appearances. And I'm talking about worldwide.

Dyanne: When it comes to fans, we're a little bit of collectors of people. I have difficulty letting go, and I must say of the fans that we have gotten letters from, and people we've met we've become very good friends with maybe a dozen of the people who simply started out by asking for a picture. Through time. There's a fella named Dan Edwards/Dan Nietzsche. He knows roles I did and forgot about. I did a film called *Black Sabbath* where I played a witch. He sent me an entire filmography and his artwork he did of me. People like that just become like family reuniting. It becomes difficult to say "don't write me anymore".

Sleazoid: Have you had any stalkers?

Dyanne: We've been very lucky. We hope we don't. When I was doing stage work, I had a few of those experiences, but the security of the hotels, and the places I worked in, deterred it. The irony again, with the height of violence, and meanness that is found in the *Ilsa* pictures, people we attract are just pussycats, really as a whole. Doing those appearances, I'd meet the sweetest young people that you could possibly cross.

Howard: At the conventions thousands of people come out who are in AWE of her. And I love it and I think it's wonderful. I mean nice people. They aren't nasty people. And then they run away. There's a great female contingent out there. And they like her for...I don't know what... giving them a new point of view?

Sleazoid: For kickin' ass! She wasn't any wimp! Also, the female Henry Fonda out of a western, which women don't have. They usually have the Sharon Kelly/ Uschi Digard type who gets constantly beaten down. *Ilsa* has her own unique aura that is its own niche in the genre in particular and cinema in general.

Howard: It would be a kick if someone offered Dyanne another show or another *Ilsa* movie. This is a strange business it takes all kinds. But for the most part we are happy with what's going on now.

A SIXTIES SEXPLOITATION ROUNDALAY

West Coast Sleaze

THE PICKUP (1968)

Director: Lee Frost

The Pickup is the first movie the producer-director team of Wes Bishop and R.L. Frost made without Bob Cresse's supervision. However, Cresse distributed the movie through his company, Olympic International, and his presence in the cast informs the sensibility of the film. The movie amply displays the Bishop-Frost team's ability to branch out into more mainstream exploitation modes. Yet, paradoxically, it remains a showcase for their flabbergasting talent for the graphic S&M psychodrama they executed so well in Cresse's productions like *Hot Spur* and *Love Camp 7*.

The Pickup is photographed in sharp black and white, which both obscures its low budget and remains faithful to the film noir roots of its gangster melodrama narrative. Two bagmen, Tony (played by Stefan Zema aka Paul Hunt, the stolid soldier in *Love Camp 7*) and Frankie (Wes) have to make a pickup of a million bucks that have been skimmed off Vegas tables. They drive back to L.A. to deliver the cash to their boss, Sal (Bob Cresse), a mobster whose hobby is endlessly tinkering with the plants in his garden. On the highway, they pick up two gals, Dana (the ubiquitous Maria Lease) and Marcia. Their car has broken down. It's Frankie's first day on the job, and Tony, who's a seasoned pro, hesitates about taking the two dolls up on their offer of a good time. But within minutes Dana has her hands over Frankie's cock in the back seat of the car, she's undressed and ready to roar.

The foursome pulls into a motel for some heavy balling. But after the party's over, Marcia pulls a gun on the guys, leaving them tied up, handcuffed and gagged with duct tape as she and Dana abscond with the money. As the guys struggle to get loose, the women take Tony's Caddy and drive back to their car, which was functioning, all along. Meanwhile, the bagmen's boss Sal is understandably growing paranoid and riled because his couriers haven't appeared on time. He phones his mob cohort Charlie (David Friedman), who skimmed the money to begin with, voicing dissatisfaction mixed with threat.

As played by Friedman, Charlie is quite a sight. His sits in a Vegas hotel suit lair, guarded by card playing hoods and his gunsel Gordon (John Alderman). Gordon's clad in a Nehru jacket and sports a beatniky beard, coolly screening calls and overseeing his boss' entourage. The suite provides a parallel universe that's a microcosm of elements of Friedman's life as a craps dealer in Phenix City and his role as an exploitation movie mogul. The suite is a mixture of a floating card party and casting call, with a variety of characters dropping in at all hours of the day and night. A hippie/folkie guitarist even is sent up to entertain everyone during a break, and is given applause after his performance.

Famed bust model Antoinette Maynard, sporting her trademark fluffed up beehive, plays an actress coming to Charlie for work as a Vegas dancer. She gives her credits – "an *art* movie... I was in *The Sound of Music* in San Diego..." Charlie chuckles over that last credit as his private barber trim his locks. Another call from an annoyed Sal momentarily sours the party atmosphere. But that doesn't stop Charlie from bedding down with Antoinette. It's another surprise to see sexploitation producer Friedman doing a long, explicit sex scene, with obvious scenes of her giving him head under the sheets. His reverie is shattered again by Sal, who demands that Charlie come to L.A. When Antoinette, wrapped in the bedsheets, looks up at Gordon, he casually dismisses her with, "I've had you for breakfast."

Meanwhile, Tony and Frankie chase down the women, following their car to L.A. by helicopter in an original action-movie touch. They surprise the girls in their home, and *The Pickup* quickly veers into an

**Las Vegas...a thousand hotels...
3000 showgirls...10,000 pleasures...
and a million ways to die!**



Sal was curious about his million



Connie just wanted to make everybody happy



Marcia knew Sal was curious about his million



Maria couldn't count higher than \$20 anyway



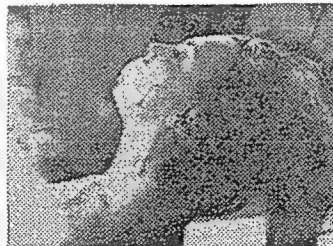
Tony kept asking Marcia where she might have left it



Charlie had 12 hours to get the million back

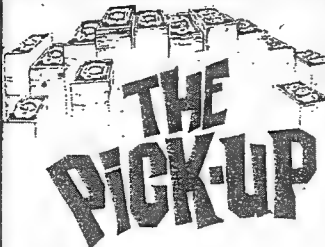
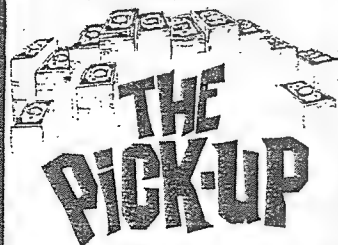


The organization was an equal opportunity employer



Dana had 10 hours to tell where the money was

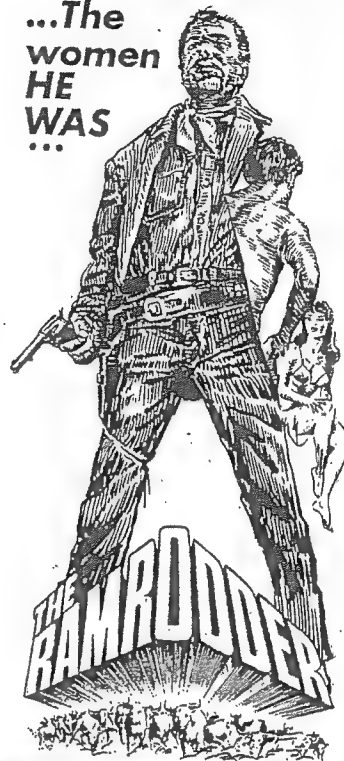
A MILLION DOLLARS WAS TO BE
DELIVERED, THE PROBLEM
WAS — WHO MADE . . .



THERE WAS A MILLION DOLLARS
GONE — QUESTION, WHO PICKED
IT UP

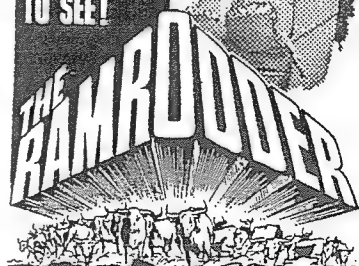
**THE ADULTS ONLY
MOVIE YOU'VE BEEN
WAITING 10 YEARS
TO SEE!!**

*All was HIS ...The
land ...The cattle
...The
women
HE
WAS
...*



IN COLOR X

**THE ADULTS
ONLY MOVIE
YOU'VE BEEN
WAITING
10 YEARS
TO SEE!**



ALL THE MORE BLATANT IN COLOR! X

intense, graphic, expressionistic S&M outburst. Tony ties the women up, gags their mouths with duct tape, and gives both a severe belt beating as they lie on the floor in an attempt to make them reveal where they've hidden the cash. He hands the belt to Frankie, who hesitates but then desperately starts whipping them, too. Tony cuts open two electrical wires that give off enormous sparks to threaten Marcia as Frankie repeatedly shoves Dana's head under water in a hot bath. Finally, Tony spills water over Marcia's body in a metaphor for a golden shower, tapes the wires over her nipples and applies electroshock torture. At this point, the movie goes into full throttle. The scene intercuts gigantic close-ups of hundred dollar bills with shots of the electroshocks viewed in closeup alternating with freeze-frame stills of the torture. It's a jarring, brutal, yet artful sequence. After this extreme treatment, the women reveal where the boxes of cash are hidden beneath old parts in a car trunk and that Charlie had arranged the theft to begin with.

Charlie arrives in L.A. and winds up wounded in a gun battle with Sal's men. Frankie and Tony hustle the women into a car, and arrive at Sal's beflowered lair with the money. Sal stacks up the bills on his desk, and is greeted by the sight of a pathetic, bleeding, gun wielding Charlie at his doorstep. With the mountains of money obscuring his hand motions, Sal conveniently shoots Charlie to death from under his desk. Then the bagmen turn the tables. Fearing that they'll be set up for a hit, anyway, they pull a gun on Sal and whisk the money off the table, taking the gals with them.

The Pickup makes it to a happy end. Frankie and Tony wind up living on a houseboat with the two girls. Frankie says, "Come to Papa," and a little boy, his son with Marcia, totters over to him. And Dana is contentedly pregnant through Tony. You're left with the assumption that the intense experience bonded them all and they'll live happily ever after on the houseboat.

The Pickup is a terrific film that's difficult to pigeonhole, which probably led it to being lower profile at the grindhouses than other Frost-Bishop sexploitation collaborations. Yet it *does* make all its disparate elements jell, functioning both as crime melodrama and sadomasochistic outburst. The sex scenes are more imaginatively and explicitly filmed than Russ Meyer's work. Even though Meyer was being lauded at this time for the innovation of mixing crime melodrama and sex with films like *Finders Keepers* *Lovers Weepers*. The location work, featuring nighttime Las Vegas, the desolate highway to Los Angeles and Sal's isolated, garden enshrouded lair, are excellent. The film definitely delivers on the sadism element, with money being the motivating force of everyone's grief.

The casting and acting are brilliant, with everyone staying in character throughout. Seeing Friedman and Cresse playing conflicting bedfellows in crime is an entertaining tweak on real life. Both men play their mobster roles with considerable relish. John Alderman's role is short but significant, and he gives a deft character turn. With her short 60s 'do and alluringly slim but shapely figure, Maria Lease again personifies the severe bottom with amazing finesse. As always, Maria sets a high standard for S&M models, able to withstand a lot of pain without any loss of dignity or intelligence.

The Pickup demonstrates that Frost and Bishop had the chops to go on and make professionally executed exploitation films like *The Black Gestapo* that delivered on the sex-violence-action matrix. And there's a happy real-life ending for Maria Lease, too. She transcended her considerable work as a sexploitation actress to become a TV writer, director and script supervisor - no mean feat for a woman with her background. Many actresses known for the sort of exploitation roughies she starred in either married and left film or, like Sharon Kelly, took the step down to porno. So Maria's made quite a career hurdle. She's even directed episodes of the popular exploitation-driven cable series, *Silk Stalkings*, along with *Ilsa* auteur Don Edmonds. Still, Maria's performances in *The Pickup* and Cresse's *Love Camp 7* enshrines her as one of the most perfectionistic cinematic masochists that *SLEAZOID* has ever witnessed.

THE RAMRODDER (1969)

Director: Van Guylder

The Ramrod is a sex western notorious for featuring pre-Charles Manson gang members Gypsy as well as soon to be murderer Bobby Beausoliel, when he was knocking around Hollywood

Boulevard trying to get a foothold in showbiz gigging in bands like Arthur Lee's Love and copping parts as an actor in exploitation movies like *Mondo Hollywood*. Bobby appears in *The Ramrod* as one of the longhaired guys playing an Indian brave. Originally since Beausoleil knew some of the girls cast in the film he went with them to the set. Once there, he was hired to build teepees. They have a definite psychedelic flavor to them. Bob Aiken, an actor well seasoned in softcore productions (including Russ Meyer's), plays *The Ramrod*'s leading Indian brave.

When Mrs. Sleazoid spoke to Bobby Beausoleil, Bobby thought it was ridiculous that he was cast to play an Indian because he has freckles and looked nothing like one. Bobby recalled seeing the film being edited. In that soft-X fashion, anytime a flash of female pubic hair showed up it was snipped from the print. Bobby chuckled that "the guy editing it was a homosexual and it would be "UH OH BEAVER" – CUT! Over and over – UH OH – BEAVER – CUT! - UH OH - BEAVER!" Mr. Sleazoid spoke to Curtis Harrington, who was chilled and stunned, flipping on the TV and learning that Bobby had committed murder. "I was friends with the other fellow in it, Bob Aiken, who I used in a small role in my film *Games*. I'd brought both of them out to eat one night and Bobby Beausoleil struck me as a very free spirit. I was really surprised."

The Ramrod is actually a very entertaining sex western, a descendant of a genre that was birthed in 1959 with *Revenge of the Virgins*. *Virgins* was a proto-nudie one-reeler that featured topless girls playing squaws driving away cowboy settlers. Mr. Sleazoid owned a print of it, which he would screen for amused houseguests. *The Ramrod* updates this formula to the hippie-driven late 1960s, playing on the premise of having groovy girls dressed as Indians for the enjoyment of middle-aged men. The female cast, including such appealing softcore stalwarts as Kathy Williams, bathe in streams and do go-go dances by campfire. In some instances living up to the roughie template, there's a long whipping scene with Aiken flogging Williams, who's notable for her frequent submissive roles in sinema. A rape triggers the movie's violent climax. The tribe captures a white man who has assaulted an Indian squaw. Bobby ties him to a tree, and castrates him. Beausoleil remembers having to shake "these bloody gonads at the camera." He thought it was a kick but nothing special in the history of film.

Beausoleil thought it was hysterical that no one playing the Indians in the film looks anything like one. The leader of the tribe is an old Jewish man. Bob Aiken is a clean cut blonde. But this only adds to the movie's charm and unintentional laughs. You can't take it as anything but playedact for your fun. *Ramrod* is surprisingly well photographed and professionally made for such a cheap movie. If seeing pretty softcore stars dressing in and out of Cowboy and Indian wear is your thing, with the dash of S&M for flavor, *Ramrod* is the ticket. And the movie is worth seeing on its pure *Hollywood Babylon* curiosity factor alone.

East Coast Sleaze

LUST WEEKEND (1967)

Director: Ron Sullivan

Lust Weekend is one of the first movies in the extraordinarily prolific oeuvre of Ron Sullivan aka Henri Pachard of hardcore fame. Manhattan's adult movie outfit Distripbix handled its distribution. Arthur Marks, who went on to become an exploitation producer-director himself, was responsible for the movie's artful, sharp black and white photography.

Lust Weekend opens summertime in a drastically less populated New York City. No one is being shoved off the sidewalks. A normal looking, happy go lucky, Manhattan early 60's era couple walk down the upper-east-side. Young and in love, they're followed by a rigid Mr. Peekaboo with ultra-perfect posture, who uses a camera to detail their movements.

A Film So Incredible
You Must See It
To Believe It!



LUST WEEKEND

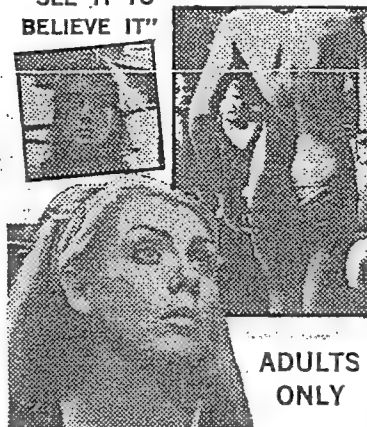


Their
Sick Cult
Preyed On
The Innocence
Of Young Couples



Strictly
adults
only

"A WEEKEND THEY
NEVER THOUGHT
POSSIBLE!" "A FILM SO
INCREDIBLE YOU MUST
SEE IT TO
BELIEVE IT"



ADULTS
ONLY

"Lust Weekend"

"A FILM SO INCREDIBLE
YOU MUST SEE IT
TO BELIEVE IT"

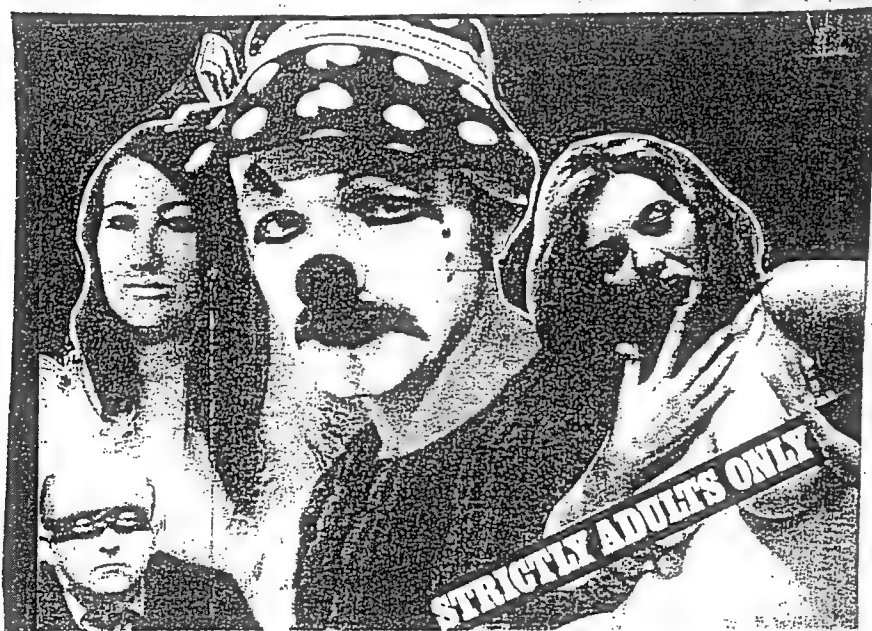
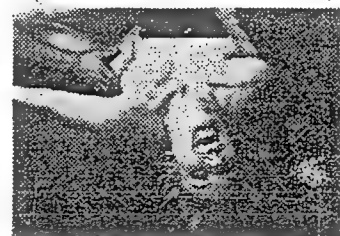


ADULTS
ONLY

"THEIR SICK
CULT PREYED
ON THE
INNOCENCE OF
YOUNG
COUPLES!"

"Lust Weekend"

MAN OR WOMAN-
SHE LOVED THEM
BOTH



The couple returns home to their love nest where they slip on a record of lute music, share an orange and read a poetry book together. A photograph of their son beams behind them on a wall. The picture of well adjusted happiness, the couple seem doppelgangers for director Sullivan and his then wife. They start to make out and Mr. Peekaboo is looking through a sheer curtain in their bathroom, snapping a few more candid snots.

A severe group of seven men and women meet around a table in a large townhouse. Mr. Peekaboo passes around the 8x10s. "These two just might work." A transsexual Dominatrix appears to strike a dramatic pose on an indoor balcony above. The Wife gets a funny letter inviting the couple to a party, and they show up at the townhouse. The Dominatrix says, "You've been brought here under false pretenses. We hope you'll cooperate in a little experiment of ours in pleasure and pain." Oddly, the couple doesn't look too frightened.

The Husband is chained and held as you hear the wife quote poetry over the soundtrack. A chick does a topless whip dance and lies on the floor, letting a man step on her. The Domme rips the Wife's dress off. She's left in her white gloves and garters to match. She brazenly removes the gloves and garters as Mr. Peekaboo chews a match. The Husband is held, hands to his sides with a chain around him by another man. The whip dancer beckons the Wife to dance, but she only awkwardly throws herself at the Domme's feet. A man throws her naked in the alley, where the Domme, wearing a dressing gown, menaces her with a whip. The Domme chases the Wife with the whip like a cat toying with a mouse.

Inside the townhouse, Mr. Peekaboo has changed into a leather short-set and is tussling with the Husband, who's on a couch with his hands tied behind his back. After the Domme beats the Wife, she walks over to her husband with kisses and tit pinches. He flips, gets free and turns her over his knee as Mr. Peekaboo sucks his own whip. The Husband slaps her face. Mr. Peekaboo hands over the whip to her, who changes roles by handing it to her Husband.

In another room, a female duo paws the passed out wife and cleans her wounds. The Domme oversees this, cigarette holder in hand, and puts her cig out on the wife's foot. A girl sits under a table in the hallway. A man clad in a black suit, sandals and wraparound shades (Bo Brundin, the stalker antagonist of Sullivan's horror opus *The Headless Eyes*) has a nude woman with dirty bare feet kneel before him in the backyard alley. He snaps her neck and kills her as the Domme beams. The Husband watches, emotionless.

Meanwhile, the wife is tied up and becomes the centerpiece of an orgy with her Husband as one of the attackers. The Husband makes out in the kitchen watching Mr. Peekaboo whip a nude boy who's chained to the kitchen table. He hands the whip to the Husband, now involving him in homosexuality while at the same time a negligee clad woman kisses him. She flops over the boy to be beaten herself.

The Husband does his Wife and the Domme at the same time and then breaks eggs over the Domme's silicon shot up tits and stomach. The scene ends with him placing a dainty daisy on the Domme's bellybutton. The Domme gets an oil rubdown and intones that the Wife is ready. The guests gather in the townhouse living room. The Domme has the Husband whip his Wife as they're both clad in crucifixion-style white loincloths. Bo sits watching in his suit and sandals, only seeking participation when there's a terminal moment. The Husband fucks the Domme from behind as the other partners do expressionistic go-go dances.

Mr. Peekaboo is in full leather on a motorcycle leading two cars down a desolate roadway containing the group. The Domme holds him on the back of his chopper in an extraordinary simultaneous portrait of male drag/female drag. The partiers stop at a desolate shore in Coney Island, where they walk in a line on the beach holding cocktail glasses. The couple walks into the water, where the Wife blows her Husband as he flashes back on his tawdry moments of sin. They submerge into the waves, and their dead bodies wash up on the shore. Mr. Peekaboo takes his last snapshot. Bo removes his sunglasses in emotional reverence to savor the necrophiliac moment.

Lust Weekend is a virtual encyclopedia of kink: whipping, bondage, troilism, orgies, female dominance, male dominance, forced homosexuality, transvestism, voyeurism – all ending on a final terminal note. True to real life S&M, the roles change constantly and fluidly between the partners. This constant fluctuation, the constant victim/executioner alternation, provides the leitmotif of the film.

Lust Weekend is proof that Paul Morrissey dominated Warhol crowd were influenced by what they were seeing on 42nd Street, not that they'd ever admit it. The Warhol-Morrissey team is far less original than they claim to be. Elements that are mimicked by Paul Morrissey in films like *Vinyl* and *The Chelsea Girls* appear throughout *Lust Weekend*. Again, Times Square has been a huge, unacknowledged influence. *Lust Weekend* more than matches the Warhol movies by having an equally fascinating cast of extremists to flesh out its proceedings.

Ron Sullivan, before and after his hardcore incarnation as Henri Pachard, was far more prolific innovative, creative and commercial than Paul Morrissey ever was able to be. *Lust Weekend* amply displays that Ron was capable of making a kinky movie that's compelling from start to finish, with a great black and white look. Although it's one of his first forays into filmmaking, *Lust Weekend* remains one of Ron's best films, in a career that spans three and a half decades.

SEX CIRCUS (1969)

Director: Leonard Kirtman

Sex Circus is one of infamous pornographer Leonard Kirtman's earliest forays in sinema. Best known for his hardcore work, Kirtman was a garment district style shystie operating out of a loft in an industrial building on 20th Street off 6th Avenue in Manhattan's Chelsea district. Kirtman became notorious for his mean spirited "screen tests." He recruited naive men out of acting ads "requiring nudity" in showbiz trade papers. The pitiful actors were bamboozled into sticking their cocks through a glory hole while they had an orgasm in a test of sexual ability. All the while being filmed without pay by Kirtman. In this manner, Kirtman built up his voluminous come shot library that he would use to fill out many films for professional porn actors who couldn't complete the act.

Kirtman was a creep. His most important artistic contribution was producing Zebedy Colt's astounding psychodramas like *Unwilling Lovers*, *The Affairs of Janice* and *The Farmer's Daughter*, the latter film featuring celebrity skin surprise Spalding Gray. Zebedy Colt recalls that Kirtman always made sure to hire one actor with zilch sexual ability, so he could always do some impromptu swinging on the set by jumping in as stunt cock. Zebedy laughingly recalled Gloria Leonard on the set of *The Farmer's Daughter* disgustedly hollering at Kirtman, "oh, Leonard, just get over here and get it over with! I know you hired him because he can't do it! Just so you can stick your dick into me!"

Sex Circus offers a rare peek at Kirtman's aesthetic before he went hardcore. As is sometimes the case using black and white photography, it gives *Sex Circus* a look that hides the shabbiness of the ultralow budget. It opens with a tawdry woman, the Madam, fondling her purse. The credits ensue atop a shadow of a woman masturbating with a whip. Starring Jane Russel and her Circus, Lois Lane, Mary Astor – Kirtman's usual Hollywood tweaking pseudonyms. Velvet Underground type music is heard on the soundtrack, only occasionally broken by the heroine's audible narration.

The Madam walks by Central Park. She goes to her apartment and speaks about how much she loves leather as she gets down to a garter belt and leather elbow gloves. She has a walk-in closet of collars, cuffs and equipment, and changes into a leather miniskirt and vest to greet the other hookers that come up to her apartment. They're very sleazy, back pages of *Screw* whorehouse women – tough luck, you're stuck with them types. The two gyrate in streetwalker garters and a feather boa. One rubs vinyl boots against another. A hooker tosses a drink in the heroine's face, who whips her, leaving fake marks.

As the Madam and another hooker have drinks at an outdoor table, a passing kid is thrown into the picture momentarily. Both women then watch a stripper before returning to the Madam's apartment. The women gyrate, with the Madam topless in a leather vest, skirt and bolero hat. There's a lot of simulated

masturbation. The Madam gives a butch woman a gift of boots, rubs them on her, and shoves her face in her tits and boots.

A trick sporting a camera and greasy pompadour comes to the apartment and gets it on with the butch, short-haired gal. All of a sudden it's a cocktail party with cheap iconographic costumes, from cowboy to leatherman. One guy whips three women with bad tiger face makeup who eventually overpower him. A party drink gets tossed in his face.

The leatherman, who's very *Scorpio Rising*-esque with his padlocks and chains, greaser hair topped by leather visor and big sideburns, gives a massage to a skank like he'd buff a bike seat. The Madam kicks people all around the room, as a Mr. Magoo peeks at the door, staring at the proceedings. The leatherman rides the girl like a motorcycle. A black lady in a Caribbean getup does a dance for the party guests. A middle-aged man makes out with a woman dressed as a kid.

Two girls fuck around with a guy dressed like Bozo the Clown. He passes out drunk. They take his wallet, showing what street people they are. The Madam catches this, slaps the thieving whore across her face and it turns into a catfight with a whip. The hookers strip and beat up the Madam. *Sex Circus* ends with everyone passed out on the floor.

Sex Circus is authentically sleazy and New Yawky, with everyone looking sweaty and filthy. The movie could almost be dubbed *Scenes From A Whorehouse*.

FELICIA (1969)

Director: Arlo Shiffen

One of the best and most original of the Distribpix batch of late sixties softcore movies is *Felicia*. It employs straight roughie elements within a use of a lesbian theme. The credits roll over an ominous, gory scene of a blonde lying dead, with her throat slit and her mouth bloody. *Felicia* then proceeds with the economical but entertaining narrative device of its titular heroine giving a voice-over commentary of the disintegration of her own life. The film is sans any dialogue exchanges.

Felicia is a deceptively innocuous looking, bespectacled lez with a pixie-butch hairdo. She drives her Chevy Impala through the snowy landscape of upstate New York. The action gets going when she picks up blonde, buxom, leather-skirted Jo hitchhiking. Felicia brings Jo back to her apartment, which has a couch seen in innumerable weekend wonder sex flicks, with a prominent "Biltmore Theater" poster for a Broadway play theater above it.

After some heavy petting displaying much titty-tussling on the couch, the two women share an amorous bath featuring more breast-to-breast contact designed to arouse male voyeurs in the Deuce audience. The next morning, Felicia serves Jo coffee and toast in bed. But she's startled by Jo's sudden sour mood, as Jo tosses the toast at her ass. Then the kinky games commence. Felicia is happy when Jo offers her a gift-wrapped box, but after joyfully opening it, is shocked that it contains a dog collar. Jo promptly puts it on her neck and leads her around, as Felicia's narration speaks of her horror and disappointment.

Jo invites two male cohorts to the apartment for a pot party orgy. The blindfolded, nude, collared Felicia is the sadistic focus of their attention. One of the two guys is Ron Skideri the Findlay-Amero leading man – Richard Jennings' nemesis "Steve" in the *Flesh* films. With his swarthy looks and beatnik sunglasses, Ron is hilariously appropriate in this small role. The other sadistic swinger is a denim-clad Dee Dee Ramone lookalike, who seems recruited right off the hustling corner of 53rd Street and 3rd Avenue. There's even a film within a film device here, as Jo photographs some of the kinky hi-jinks.

The group shares hits off a pot pipe. The gals get nude as the guys strip down to their BVD's. Felicia's narration complains about the degradation she's experiencing, but then finds relief in the arms of the Dee Dee type after she's taken a few tokes of grass.



'Felicia'

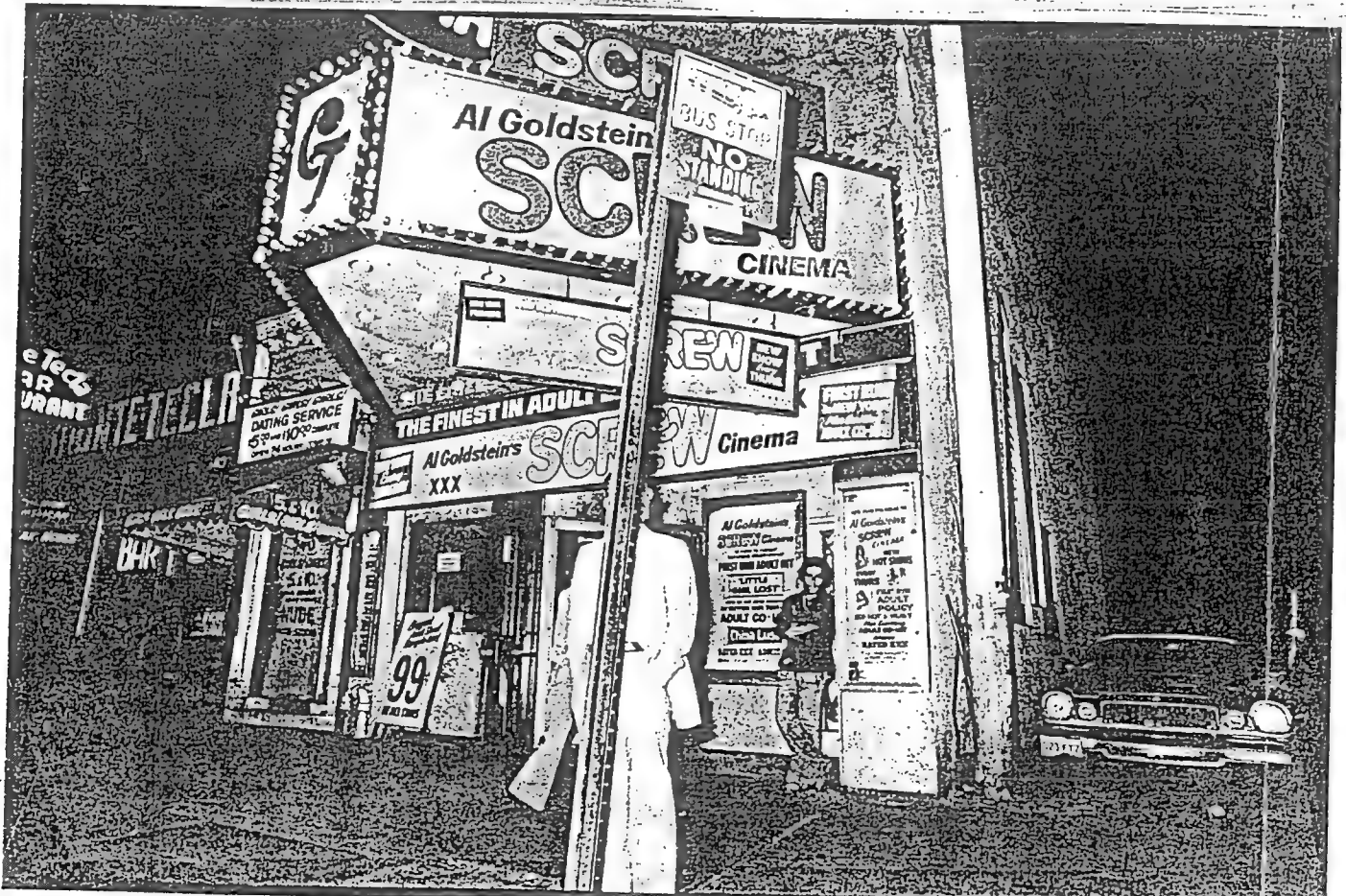
**FELICIA
SHE'LL MAKE YOU**

CLIMB THE WALL

SHE WAS "WILD IN THE SHEETS"

**HER IDEA OF FUN
WAS A NIGHT OUT
WITH THE BOYS,
OR GIRLS**

**ADULTS
ONLY**



Jo invites the fellas over for a second helping of skin the following night. The scene is too freaky for Felicia's addled brain cells. As Jo gets balled, Felicia reaches for a handy kitchen knife and slits Jo's throat - the same shocking sight that began the hostile film. Felicia jumps in her Chevy Impala to flee the chaos she's just created. She stops to pick up another busty, trashy blonde, much the same type as Jo. The surprise is on Felicia, though, when the blonde pulls a switchblade on *her*. The blonde removes her top, looking very sexy bare-chested with jeans, forcing Felicia to also strip to the waste and join her in a bit of knife-point make-out. The two topless women make out amidst a snowy landscape. After having her fill, the knife-wielding blonde bitch tosses Felicia out of her own Impala bare ass into the snow, flinging her clothes out the window at her before she drives off in the stolen car. In the bitter end leaving Felicia a complete mental wreck, lost and fucked over in every sense of the word.

Felicia is unique in the canon of sixties sinema in that its narrative is driven by sexually sadistic lesbians who know how to use men to abuse other females. Within its simple structure, the movie offers something for everyone: S&M, big breasts, and a running physical dichotomy between buxom blondes and our dark haired butch heroine. The casting is perfect. The black and white photography is both crisp and imaginative, with the alternation of interior and exterior settings moving along the sadism that drives the movie. For a quickie film shoot, *Felicia* has a tightly developed sense of the bizarre that's strange enough to create its own metasexual universe.

After making *Felicia* and a string of sexploitation movies distributed by New York's ubiquitous Distribpix, producer/director/writer Arlo Shiffen went with the sexual times and made porno chic hits like *Little Orphan Sammy* a film that had the novelty of Andy Milligan stock player Neil Flanagan in a non-balling role as Daddy Warbucks.

THE THREE SEXATEERS (1970)

Director: Robert Ruttenberg

The Three Sexateers is a quintessential one-day wonder. Its three female characters, who are only distinguished from each other primarily by their hair length - all variants on dark, one with a fifties 'do, one with waist length black hair, and the pixie-butth girl who starred in *Felicia* - go for a snowy weekend ski-trip. Their car breaks down, and the movie revolves around a long orgy between the three gals and a guy who's quite happy to allow them to crash at his pad. Towards the end, another of his male friends joins in. To the strains of a white noise guitar, one of the heroines provides barely audible narration highlighting the ecstatic events, *The Three Sexateers* revolves mostly around the possibilities of three gals and one guy, who sports the grooming of curly dark hair and old-fashioned greaser sideburns. The film is a meditation of the possibilities of action between the male and the three women: in the bedroom, bathtub; and winding up with all three hot mammas on top of him in a pileup on the bed. Eventually the shenanigans fall into the living room, before a log fireplace.

The Three Sexateers shows the Distribpix pictures edging towards hardcore. There is total nudity for the female characters throughout, and the male leads mostly leaves his BVDs on softcore style, occasionally removes them for some simulated humping under the sheets. The cast is appropriately sleazy looking. There's a nonstop barrage of sex from beginning to end. The movie opens and closes with a few stills from the film, and is a presentation of "Yoni Films" - "Yoni" being Latin derived occult terminology for pussy.

FOUR ON THE FLOOR (1970)

Director: Kenneth Hansen

Four on the Floor is another Distribpix item that revolves around wall-to-wall sex. The plot ostensibly revolves around our heroine Priscilla who's waiting on her boyfriend Red to show up at Kennedy Airport. Instead, she's met by Red's friends, who carry on with her in a series of motel room orgies, playing swinging games like "Four on the Floor" and "Spin the Body." Again, there's a lot of

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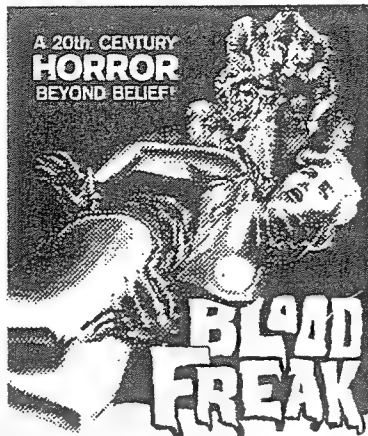
BLOOD FREAK

color • 1972

directed by Steve Hawkes and Brad Grinter
The World's Only Turkey-Monster-Anti-Drug-Pro-Jesus-Gore Film!

Finding himself sandwiched between Bible-thumping good-girl Angel and her bad-girl sister Ann, a musclebound biker named Herschell (STEVE HAWKES) falls under Ann's seductive spell when she offers him some weed. Quickly becoming a writhing, spastic addict the big galoot then gets a job at a turkey farm where he's fed meat treated with an experimental drug and, like any junkie who eats tainted turkey meat, turns into a man with a giant turkey head who proceeds to attack fellow drug addicts whose blood he drinks with his pointy little turkey beak.

Regional gobble-gobble-gore from Florida!
#7768 VHS • \$15



CURSE OF THE ALPHA STONE

1972 • color • directed by Stewart Malleon

Abe Adams (JIM SCOTLIN) is a university-professor-teaching-genetics by day and a part-time-mad-doctor-experimenting-with-alchemy at night. He's also something of a baby-faced stud. But the real sexual fireworks start when a mixture of chemicals, electricity, and mysticism turns powder into a glowing stone -- specifically, "a philosopher's stone" -- the sole function of which seems to turn people into sex fiends.

Another deranged regional obscurity unearthed by JEFFREY C. HOGUE that will leave most viewers with their mouths agape and a feeling that the end of the world must be near. #7766 VHS • \$15



MONSTER

A GO-GO!



MONSTER A GO GO

1965 • b&w

produced by H.G. Lewis and Bill Rebane

What happens when a film started by the director of *The Giant Spider Invasion* is finished by HERSCHELL GORDON LEWIS, the man who made *Two Thousand Maniacs*? Yup, you get *Monster A Go Go*, a screwy sci-fi obscurity in which an astronaut goes up, but a 10-foot, cruste-faced creature comes back. Starring real-life giant Henry "Horace" Hite as the Spaceman Who Scares Chicago, and spewing radiation that leaves his victims "shriveled up like a prune," the lumbering galoot stalks sexy sunbathers, strangles scientists, and attacks twist-party teens. And because he's about to "contaminate everybody within a radius of 50 miles," the military desperately tries to corner him in a deserted stretch of sewer tunnel until an absurdly surreal ending turns everything upside down.... #7764 VHS • \$15



BLOOD BEAST OF MONSTER MOUNTAIN

1965/1976 • color • directed by Massey Cramer and Donn Davison

Rather than make a new Bigfoot movie from scratch, exploitationeer DONN DAVISON turned an older film into one, selecting as his prey *The Legend of Blood Mountain*. Shot in Georgia and released in 1965, the film concerns a roly-poly reporter named Bestoink Dooley (GEORGE ELLIS) who dresses like a burlesque comic and investigates the "bleeding" of the title mountain during which he's chased by a strange, white-skinned monster man. Despite the fact that the film was more a comedy than a horror film, Davison merely cut the old monster out of the film and, in its place, added new scenes with a Bigfoot-like beast. He also added himself, DONN DAVISON, World Traveler, Lecturer, and Psychic Investigator as an on-screen Bigfoot expert.

As might be expected, the end result is hilariously schizophrenic. After Davison's death, the film fell into limbo until JEFFREY C. HOGUE acquired it and gave it the more exploitive title *Blood Beast of Monster Mountain*. #7765 VHS • \$15

DOCTOR GORE

1973 • color • directed by J.G. Patterson Jr.

The Perfect Woman. Some Assembly Required. Deeply unhinged over the death of his wife, plastic surgeon and part-time mad doctor DON BRANDON immediately seeks a new mate. Bypassing traditional courtship rituals, the love-starved lunatic first tries to bring a pretty corpse back to life in the basement of his North Carolina castle. When that fails, Doctor Brandon becomes *Doctor Gore* as he switches to Plan B: custom-building the girl of his dreams from body parts severed from sexy young gals. Behaving like a stud version of Jack the Ripper, the creepy doc first seduces, then dissects a variety of women he dates, taking the most perfect pieces from each until -- viola! -- he's stitched together and brought to life a centerfold style creation named Anitra. But though he thinks he's created the ultimate love slave, Anitra has other ideas.... #7767 VHS • \$15

DOCTOR GORE



THE WONDERFUL LAND OF OZ

1969 • color • directed by Barry Mahon

This wholesome, goofy, eminently G-rated film-for-the-whole-family was, in fact, produced and directed by BARRY MAHON who churned out tons of exploitation nudies during the Sixties. The *Wonderful Land of Oz*, an ambitious, enjoyable, wacky little musical (!!!) full of colorfully grotesque charm.

But instead of Dorothy and Toto, there's little Tip and Jack the Pumpkinhead who flee from his wicked witch-like stepmother to Emerald City which is being invaded by a "bunch of silly girls" led by the bratty General Jinjur who wants to depose The Scarecrow from the throne. Tip and the Pumpkinhead come to the Scarecrow's aid with help from the Tin Man, Glinda the Good Fairy, a flying sofa, and a saucer-eyed creature called a Wogglebug.

Like a low-budget Sid and Marty Krofft TV Show! #7771 VHS • \$15

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK

1970 • color • directed by Barry Mahon

Former Nudie King BARRY MAHON strikes again with *Jack and the Beanstalk*, an hilariously cheap retelling of the classic tale shot on about five minimalist sets at Florida's Pirates World amusement park.

Once upon a time an adolescent Jack bemoans the death of his daddy and the theft of their "enchanted possessions," specifically a mechanical hen that laid golden eggs and a harp that played beautiful tunes by itself. Jack's Ma tells him to sell the family cow for cash. Instead, Jack trades it for some magic beans that grow into a giant beanstalk. And sure enough, courtesy of some godawful effects, Jack sees the giant that stole the hen and harp, and even a bag of golden eggs. And did we mention that Jack and the Beanstalk is a musical too? #7770 VHS • \$15



Asylum of Satan

ASYLUM OF SATAN

1971 • color • directed by William B. Girdler

Concert pianist Lucina Martin (CARLA BORELLI) finds herself trapped "among strange people experiencing terrifying things" at Pleasant Hill Hospital under the care of Dr. Jason Specter (CHARLES KISSINGER) who won't tell her why she's there or exactly what she's suffering from. And when her fiancé, Chris Duncan (NICK JOLLEY), isn't allowed to see her, he shows up with a reluctant detective only to find Pleasant Hills boarded up and deserted except for a groundskeeper who looks just like Dr. Specter. But after finding a severed head lying in the greenhouse, Duncan realizes he better get inside before Lucina is sacrificed to a creature straight from the fiery depths!

Fun, dumb, backwoods booga-booga shot in Jefferson County, Kentucky. #7769 VHS • \$15

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female nudity and simulated sex by guys protected from the censor's scissors by their BVD's. When Red does pick her up, the fun with the swingers continues with exercise machines adding to the positional changes.

What is charmingly sleazy about *Four on the Floor* is that it uses the 8mm loop device of having dialogue cards pop up between the action to compensate for the lack of any spoken dialogue. Also remarkable about the movie is that it occasionally cuts away from the sex action to give scenic views of 1969 Times Square and many historically significant adult theaters. Chelly Wilson's all-male Eros Theater is glimpsed, its marquee premiering *The Stud Farm*, a notable early gay movie written by Martin Margulies aka Johnny Legend. There's a view of Chelly's Cameo Theater, too, along with the Deuce's Rialto Theater playing Andy Milligan's *Kiss Me Kiss Me Kiss Me*. Red picks up Priscilla right next door to the Rialto. These scenes are very proto Avon Productions/Phil Prince in that they almost seem like ads dropped in for Chelly Wilson's theaters. Peppering out the location shots are scenes of Park Avenue, the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel, the East River Drive, and the 42nd Street automat. *Four on the Floor* is as obsessed with giving a candid shot of the New York area in 1969 as it is in its plentiful sex scenes.

THIGH SPY (1967)

Director: William Henniger

Thigh Spy is a sexploitation film with vaudevillian elements. It's a predecessor to the type of hardcore movies that would be made in the 1970s featuring mustachioed Harry Reems as the carnal clown. Here, a mustachioed painter and his perpetually drunken mod-era girlfriend are in hock to a mobster who lives on a houseboat. The mobster is decked out in a black suit with white tie, and is surrounded by three nude female concubines. He offers the painter the opportunity to pay his debts by doing a hit on a spy. The artist goes home, splashes paint on a canvas, declaring "that's a War-hole." He then goes to stalk the spy at an 8th Avenue bar, where the spy (one of the *Four on the Floor* cast members), dressed in a straightlaced business suit argues with his girlfriend. In the next booth, a couple make out in the nude. The artist unsuccessfully fires a bunch of shots at him.

Eventually our hapless artiste and his alcohol wasted old lady grab a beat up station wagon. They trail the spy in his imported auto up to a snowy upstate cabin, where he makes another failed attempt to shoot him again. The spy's girlfriend invites the couple in, and the movie concludes as they have a four way swing. While the movie's slapstick is occasionally tiresome, *Thigh Spy* does sustain an amusing tone throughout. Another plus of the film is its use of New York locations, whether it's the bystanders looking at the spy's girlfriend devour an entire pizza in one of the comic relief scenes, who seem incredulous a movie's being shot. All in all, *Thigh Spy* offers a series of entertaining set pieces with a constant pulse of sex and nudity.

* * *

All these films are offered from the voluminous sexploitation library of Something Weird Video, which has recently further expanded it by acquiring many of the 1960s Distribpix titles. The copies are crystal clear, and the boxes, true to this company's standards, all feature the original ad campaigns

WOMEN GET STRANGE IDEAS

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“We’re All Freaks... One Way Or Another”

GANJA AND HESS (1972) (aka BLACK EVIL, BLACK VAMPIRE, BLACKOUT: THE MOMENT OF TERROR, BLOOD COUPLE (edited version), DOUBLE POSSESSION (edited version), VAMPIRES OF HARLEM)

Director: Bill Gunn

Ganja and Hess is the only film by the late African-American playwright Bill Gunn. Mr. Sleazoid originally saw it at a screening at Joe Papp’s Public Theater downtown, where Mr. Gunn introduced the film. He was proud to be showing his own original uncut director’s print, which runs close to two hours. Before this screening, the only uncut print of the movie had languished in a damaged version at the Museum of Modern Art.

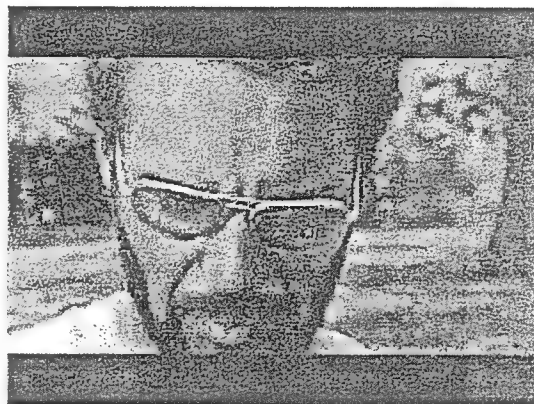
Distributor, Kelly-Jordan was annoyed at Gunn that didn’t make another *Blacula*. Kelly-Jordan specialized in offbeat blaxploitation fare like *Honeybaby Honeybaby*. They radically re-cut the film, and it played in a myriad of titles, especially *Double Possession* and *Blood Couple*. Gunn was at their unsupervised re-editing of a work that he poured his heart and soul into. He was so outraged that at one point demanded his name be removed from the prints. However, *Ganja and Hess* is far from a commercial film; it’s very much in its maker’s head.

Ganja and Hess is a unique film in many ways. Firstoff, the characters are African-Americans, but they’re not stereotypes. Dr. Hess Green (the late Duane Jones, familiar to audiences for his portrayal of the hero in *Night of the Living Dead*), is a man of wealth, respect and taste. He’s a geologist and anthropologist. Hess lives on a huge, isolated estate in upstate New York. The preacher we see giving the sermon in the beginning, going *HIGHER HIGHER* (Sam Waymons) chauffeurs the doctor’s Rolls. He talks about how doing gospel makes him “feel good,” how he’s held a variety of subservient jobs, including stableboy. But he has tremendous empathy of Dr. Hess. “He’s not a *bad* man... he’s an *addict*...”

Although the movie contains many explicit scenes of heterosexual sex, they’re filmed from a homosexual man’s point of view, and there is a great deal of frontal male nudity

But director Gunn treats sexuality in a frank, human manner rarely seen in films.

Very much a playwright’s film – it’s conceptualized into three sections called *Victim*, *Survival* and *Letting Go* – *Ganja and Hess* still holds together in a very cinematic manner. It looks at how blacks derived Christianity from their own African-American sensibility. But importantly, *Ganja and Hess* is a metaphor for drug addiction, one of the most moving and perceptive ever filmed.



Dr. Hess

Dr. Hess’ basic situation is set up by the title cards that introduce the film: Hess, while studying the ancient African civilization of Myrthia was stabbed by a dagger – once for the Father, once for the Son and once for the Holy Ghost. The stabbing made him impossible to be killed, impossible to die, and with a jones for blood - in popular mythology, a vampire.

In the first part of the film, *Victim*, Dr. Hess goes to an opulent philanthropic institute in to pick up his new assistant, George Medo, played by the film’s auteur Bill Gunn. Along the way there’s a bloody car accident, with Hess taking special note of the corpse. The craving has started.

Medo tells Hess it’s an honor to be working for him. They go back to Hess’ mansion and share a quiet candlelit dinner. But

realistically it looks like two guys having a conversation after they shot a speedball and the cigarettes they're smoking might as well be cigar-sized joints.

Medo tells Hess about a wild party he attended in Amsterdam, and you start sensing that he's either deeply into a bag himself or not very stable mentally. The latter proves true when Hess discovers Medo up a tree on his grounds, drunk out of his mind, with a very badly fashioned noose hanging from it.

"I was going to drown myself in one of your lakes but I have an intense fear of water."

"Look," Hess tells him. "Would you believe I'm the only colored in the area. And if they check this out there's sure to be a lot of questions..."

Having momentarily talked Medo out of his suicidal moment, Medo stabs Hess with a dagger in one of the many scenes that you aren't certain are fantasy or reality. Hess, though, emerges unscathed. As Hess enjoys some vintage jazz music, Medo takes a long bath in which he gets out stark naked. He points a gun at his chest and shoots. Medo's blood covers the bathroom floor. Hess sees this scene and gets an his hands and knees lapping the blood off the floor in what looks like a prolonged kiss between the two men. Medo is dead. Hess bottles up the rest of the blood and doles it out to himself as needed. Much like a methadone addict. Pretending for the sake of social propriety before others that it is just wine. Every now and then he gets blood sick. A reflection of junkie need.

The next section *Survival* is devoted to some of the techniques Hess uses to keep up his jones. He goes for a blood test in a ghetto clinic (Mount Vernon, a mostly black Westchester slum). After his test, he quietly tosses a firecracker in a full wastepaper basket. While everyone's distracted at the POP! he steals a bunch of blood samples, putting them under his overcoat, just like someone grabbing a prescription pad on the way out of a doctor's office.

Hess keeps the blood in his wine cellar and consumes it like red wine every time he starts feeling sick. He has visions of the Queen of Myrthia (blues singer Mabel King known to TV audiences in the 70's as the Mama in the

show *That's My Mama*) in full African garb beckoning to him.

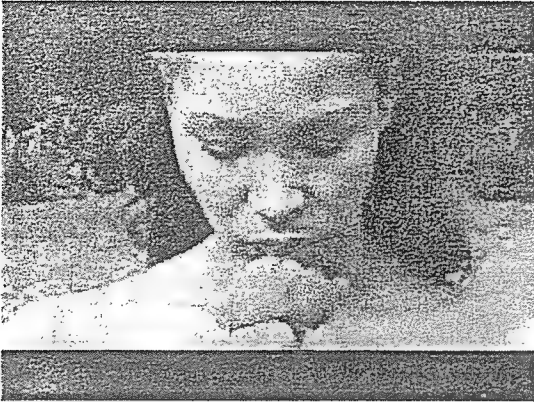
Hess goes to a sleazy dive where a prostitute and her pimp are sitting at the bar. The pimp is insistent that she make some money. She picks up Hess, and sure enough, the pimp tries to stab and rob him. Hess, not one to put up with nonsense stabs the pimp to death as the hooker, now without her \$20 blonde wig, shoots at him in horror. But she's even more horrified when Hess won't die. He turns the gun on her. He places their bodies next to each other, cut the pimp's jugular vein, and imbibes. Sure enough, the sex sellers likely had syph, and Hess immediately violently vomits up their contaminated blood. He leaves the two stiff to stare into death space.



The unlucky player and his ho

The doctor's routine is shattered by a phone call from Mrs. Medo (Marlene Clark). While having acted in numerous exploitation films like *Night of the Cobra Woman* and *Switchblade Sisters*, Clark is remembered for her unbilled role in one of the sexy ad parodies in *Putney Swope*. Her model's good looks and masklike face fit the role of Mrs. Ganja Medo like a warm glove.

Ganja calls from the airport. She's just got back from Amsterdam looking for her missing husband furious that he has vanished and left her without funds. "Look, has he been acting *funny* again?" Hess offers to send a limo to the airport to pick her up and bring her back to his estate, initiating the final segment of the film, *Letting Go*.



Ganja

Ganja quickly seduces Hess, and they get on quite well together. Until she demands that his manservant show her the wine cellar. It's filled with jars of blood. And she's shocked to discover the frozen corpse of her husband. Who wouldn't be?

Ganja confronts the freaky doctor at dinner. He tells her that her husband was suicidal. She knows that to be true. In a very moving scene, she talks about losing her virginity as a 12 year old and her mother calling her a slut. That her mother would admit she was beautiful, but would never say she loved her. "And after that I always knew that Ganja had to take care of Ganja..." She's like many women who hook up with drug addicted, unstable men, although she doesn't share their intense need for substances herself. Though she's not above sharing an amusing anecdote about smuggling substances in from Amsterdam in a suppository, past the noses of drug-sniffing pooches at the airport.

Ganja falls into a disturbing dream in which Hess stabs her with the cursed dagger three times. "I had a dream that you murdered me." In a metaphor for turning a girl on, he offers her some of his special "red wine" after she starts feeling sick.

"Do you still think I'm psychotic?" asks Dr. Hess.

"Yes."

"Does that make you afraid of me?"

"No." Ganja laughs. "We're all freaks - one way or another."

Ganja and Hess get married wearing by minister Waymons. They walk through his grounds. "The only perversions we condemn are the perversions of others," Hess declares truthfully. He states, "I will not be judged. I will not be tortured," in defiance of societal norms against those who are aware self-aware enough to medicate in the face of conventional norms.

Hess returns to Mount Vernon, where he sees a white lady holding a baby on a tenement staircase. At this point, the drug analogy is obvious. The woman is like any of those insane dealers who sells with their kids. You're not even sure if she's a prostitute or a dealer. When you see her exsanguinated bloodstained body and the innocent infant left alone crying, you sense that Hess would like his whole nightmarish existence to stop. The scene is not very explicit but horrific in its implications. This is the murder that makes him think twice.

Ganja and Hess invite a man with a huge Afro over for dinner. By this time Ganja is used to her husband's ways and is into it herself. After dinner, Ganja makes love to the pick up in a long, very graphic sequences. Hess kills him for his blood, leaving red gashes all over his back. As the guy is placed in a body bag and tossed on Hess' massive grounds, Ganja hysterically screams "he's not dead yet!"

Finally Dr Hess goes to the gospel church, where he receives the touch and blessing of the minister Waymons who had married him. He returns to his dark living room where he surrounds himself with crucifixes. He becomes sicker and sicker, but doesn't give in to his habit. He dies, but Ganja has inherited his curse. The last shot is of the Afro'd pickup, who's risen from the dead running nude out of the swimming pool, his enormous dick flying in the wind, towards the mansion. Perhaps he'll be taking over with Ganja where the doctor could not go on.

Ganja and Hess is a slow, atmospheric, moody film. A midpoint between arthouse and exploitation, it's quite unlike anything in films. See it with someone you love. And for the junk lovers in the audience, think twice before turning someone on. Lonely as you may be.

“CHARLES’ WILL IS MAN’S SON”

THE MANSON MASSACRE (1972)

Director: Kentucky Jones

The Manson Massacre is the most obtuse, nefarious and little seen in the clutch of exploitation films depicting and exploiting the Manson gang. It was released through the distributor Newport, a beard for Hallmark Films of *Mark of the Devil* and *Last House on the Left* infamy. Hallmark didn't want to be publicly associated with a tasteless crime rip off that could result in a lawsuit from a victim's family or to become by association yet another unsolved murder in the Manson daisy chain of freakishness. Most of its cast members and its director hide under pseudonyms. *The Manson Massacre* is a shocker whose explicitness and lowdown sexual content knows no bounds.

The Manson Massacre is like a Commedia Dell'Arte interpretation of the Manson Affair within the commercial exploitation template of a hard simulation porn feature. You can almost imagine the San Francisco Mime Troupe playing out the events before a group of stoned penniless hippies as they munch their free lunch in Golden Gate Park. The film executes what Bob Roberts had in mind for *Sweet Savior* had he had access to real California locales, but takes the sex and violence to a greater extreme. Like many Hallmark releases in 1972, the "R" rating is obviously a fake.

In school play fashion, *The Manson Massacre* morphs Charlie's rather large commune into Chuck accompanied by four girls, who are made up to resemble Gypsy, Leslie Van Houton, Susan Atkins and a Squeaky/Snake Lake/Ouish type. It moves their lair from the Spahn Ranch to a desolate street, where the gang crashes in a head shop decorated lair, nestled under a handpainted "Free Store" sign. All the characters are prone to unwanted sexual flashbacks of their pre-Chuckles life that provide the forward thrust of the film. The flashbacks appear in black and white, contrasting sharply with veteran sexploitation cinematographer Bob Maxwell's inexpensive yet lushly velour color cinematography. Maxwell's wife Nora did the make-up and places the characters in iconographic psychedelic threads or skimpy swinger wear.

The movie opens with a peek at the sexually swingin' but gritty Tate/Polanski household. The grouping at that house is tastelessly depicted as a bunch of Hollywood orgiasts. *The Corpse Grinders'* Sean Kenney plays Votyk Frikowski. It immediately crosscuts them with Charlie's band of dysphorics. Charlie nodded out in his crash pad, surrounded by his four-girl harem. He thrashes about, having the flashbacks of his unhappy teen years. Uschi Digart pseudonymously plays Charlie's hooker mom. How do you *not* recognize Uschi? She was the biggest tit glam girl in Hollywood Boulevard B pictures. The casting is fascinatingly terrible in this film. You never believe Uschi is Charles Manson's mother for a second. She has none of the deep fried grizzle that Chuck's mom was endowed with. She licks her lips at the camera. As young Charlie is showering, she opens the curtain and starts fucking him with "Charlie, Charlie, my baby..." Chuck wakes from his bad Oedipal dream and vomits. A lute-playing hippie, representing Bobby Beausoliel, skips by the shabby deserted house that is representative of the infamous spiral staircase.

Charlie and the gang go on a garbage run, looting a church poorbox dumpster. There, he scoops up another female cult member, who has just given birth. Charlie feeds her a tab of acid in his Volks hippie van and off they go leaving her troubles behind. Later you see a horrified church employee discover the orphaned tot in dumpster. The Charlie of *The Manson Massacre* gives out LSD like M&Ms. After a bad trip, Chuckles beats a petite redhead who flashes back to her father giving her a bare-assed belt beating, ending with her calling him "Daddy" and embracing Chuck meaningfully in a symbolic S/M scenario played out to straighten the girl's neurotic head. During the S/M session Charlie flashes again on his own distorted youth. A gross, tattooed biker type sporting a greasy filthy pompadour fucks his mother as the young, clean-cut Charlie walks in on the shocking scene. He can only clench his fists in rage as the slob barbarian bangs away at his moms.

A jarhead greaser shows up at cult headquarters looking for one of the girls and Charlie spooks him away. The Van Houton-based character flashes back to publicly humiliating her father with a vibrator in a store, to the shock and embarrassment of onlookers. Charlie helps her shoplift it. This whacked out fivesome climb in their

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"THE MANSON MASSACRE"

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hippie van. The Atkins character recalls feeding her cocktail toting mother a joint to her father's dismay. The father is played by a cheap James Caan lookalike. She calls the biker, who's a proxy for Danny De Carlo, waiting for her outside their suburban home a "sex machine." She then gives both her parents the finger as she climbs on back of his chopper.

Charlie and the girls pull up at a funeral home. The group hauls the stiff out of a parked hearse, complete with a tag hanging off the toe, to play with a coffin. The old queen funeral director comes rushing out, only to be intimidated, knocked out, fed a tab of acid and placed in the van with the corpse. Charlie and the girls help themselves to the hearse as well, driving it up to the Tate residence, which is realistically set in a cul-de-sac. Once there, freewheeling Charlie offers the girls to Frykowski, who immediately welcomes them in the house after their topless tit flashing turns him on.

Inside, the group chants a mantra in a circle as a prelude to the action. An explicit orgy ensues which brings on Charlie's unwanted flashbacks in spades. As he has his girls do the sex work, Charlie rests in the hearse's coffin. He recalls fucking his own mother when suddenly the mean motherfucker biker walks in on it. In self-defense Charlie smashes a cheap breakaway chair over the bully. Quick cut to Charles being raped in a prison shower.

The Gypsy character has a lesbian flashback. She remembers a three-girl gangbang, with a butch lesbian shoving her head under her dress. The Van Houton figure flashes on her own father sexually assaulting her. This prompts her to start whipping Frykowski until she draws blood. He's horrified that the party's kinks have turned violently against him, and she finishes him off with a mace hanging down the wall.

In the living room, Gypsy stabs the blonde surrogate for Sharon Tate whose wig is so huge it threatens to envelope her totally. The girls also kill Abigail Folger, who's depicted as walking around without underwear in a sheer babydoll set. Jay Sebring walks in, only to get a spear in the back. The girls get in the hearse and drive away, with the implication they got away with murder. The eerie last shot shows a "house for sale" sign with a phone number at the crime scene.

Although *The Manson Massacre* is highly fictionalized, what is creepy about the movie's cavalcade of perversions is its fixation on sadomasochistic heterosexual incest. What makes the film even more disturbing is its extra layer of insider knowledge about the Family. The late cinematographer Bob Maxwell and his wife Nora actually *knew* Bobby Beausoliel and Gypsy after working with them on the sex western the married couple had made called *The Ramrod*. Due to his close proximity to the real individuals and the twisted sexual content of the film, the director chose to remain anonymous when he released the film. "Kentucky Jones" is actually the name of a mid-1960s TV series with Dennis Weaver playing the title character, a small town veterinarian – and likely a hint at the filmmaker's identity.

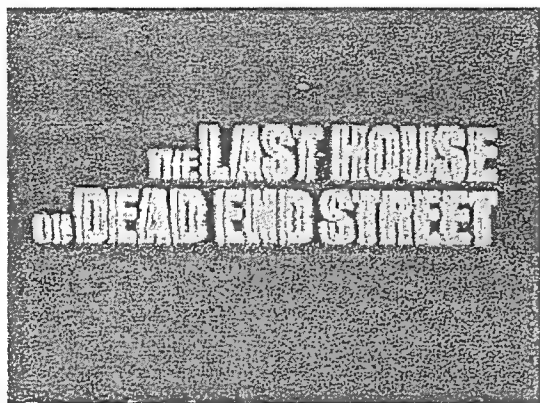
The presence of Uschi Digart as Charlie's mom is a jawdropper, although it's another case of playing against type. You know Charlie's real mother wasn't a famous bazoom model but a hag streetwalker. Exploitation vets like Candice Roman and Debbie Osborne handle their roles like the pros they are. Out of all, Sean Kenney seems like an old-fashioned greaser out of an Elks Club stag movie and a hardcore junkie to boot. Blaisdell Makee doesn't resemble Charlie in the least; in fact, he's foreign looking, much like Bhakshir in *I Drink Your Blood*.

The Manson Massacre is a miracle of concision, clocking in at 65 minutes, with no moments of boredom. As schizophrenic as it is, its mere existence makes the film an instant classic in the pantheon of great crimes exploitation movies. *The Manson Massacre* punches the viewer in the face with a fresh shock every minute arising out of a thick, reality driven sense of evil and sexual psychosis.

After being a dormant legend for almost three decades, *The Manson Massacre* has been unearthed by www.5minutesonline.com in a perfect German language print. The movie was a theatrical hit in der Fatherland under a title that loosely translates as *Touches of Satan*. Although it doesn't have subtitles, you'll get the gist quite easily. In fact, every Manson derived horror film – from *I Drink Your Blood* to *The Night God Screamed* – has attained cult status in Germany. Wonder why...

TERRY HAWKINS SPEAKS: A CHAT WITH ROGER WATKINS

Last House on Dead End Street had always both revolted and fascinated *Sleazoid Express* since Mr. Sleazoid first caught it at the Cine 42 Twin in 1979. At the 1999 *Sleazoid Express* Film Festival at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco, Mr. and Mrs. Sleazoid screened the film as a lost horror classic. It was the festival's opening night shocker. Although almost three decades old, the movie lost none of its power to impress and appall. By the disembowelment scene, two couples ran from the theater, one girl bitterly asking aloud "what kind of a person could made such a thing?!"



Sleazoid searched high and low for the enigmatic "Victor Janos" who made the movie. After *Sleazoid's* rediscovery of the film, director Roger Watkins finally surfaced to "show the world" - in the words of his alter-ego Terry Hawkins - who he was. Watkins is better known to most sleazemongers as pornographer Richard Mahler, the auteur behind such XXX classics as *Her Name Was Lisa*, *Corruption* and *Midnight Heat*.



Roger as Terry Hawkins

Mr. Sleazoid: How did you make *Last House on Dead End Street*?

Watkins: I wrote it, produced it, directed it, edited it and played Terry Hawkins. I had no idea no one *anyone* even remembered it.

Mr. Sleazoid: I was surprised that "Victor Janos" and "Richard Mahler" were the same person. When you made *Last House*, were you involved with pornography yet? Did you know any of the other folks like Mal Worob [the low-level pornographer who shot the phony snuff footage in *Snuff*] back then?



"Steve" - quite a resemblance to slobbering Mal Worob

Watkins: I didn't know him until well - that film was made in '73, actually the end of '72, that's when I made *Last House*. It was called *The Cuckoo Clock From Hell* when I made it.

Mr. Sleazoid: It was also called *The Funhouse*.

Watkins: *The Funhouse*, earlier, I guess, and then *Last House on Dead End Street*. All unbeknownst to me, by the way.

Mr. Sleazoid: I saw it as *Last House* on 42nd Street. Where did you see it?

Watkins: Yeah, 42nd Street. My friend Paul was teaching at SUNY Oneida. I used their camera a year after I graduated. It was an Arriflex 16mm camera. That big old building was a normal

school once in about 1900. Actually, it was abandoned and I shot the whole thing in there. Pretty much. All the murder sequences.

Mr. Sleazoid: Why was the movie held up in litigation for years?

Watkins: Barbara McGraw. She decided she didn't want to be in it. Then she turned around and sued me. I got served in '73 and I think that was resolved in the New York State Supreme Court about '74. Actually it was in UPI or API or one of those press things and nobody in my family knew what I was up to and all of a sudden there's a front page paper: "WATKINS WINS NUDE SUIT"



One of the nude loops in LHOVES

Mr. Sleazoid: That was one movie that people stared in disbelief at. The Deuce was a hard audience to scare but your film did it. Are you still active in movies?

Watkins: I just finished a script I'd love to do. You know what it is - I made so much shit. I was totally into filmmaking. I was totally in control of *Last House on Dead End*. I wasn't in control of the release print, which the distributors did. They cut out a lot of it.

Mr. Sleazoid: I saw two versions of it. I saw what's called the complete version when it first opened and I saw another version where the scene of Nancy Palmer getting killed is shortened.

Watkins: I've seen one where they cut the whole scene of the little pin snips are coming down towards her stomach.

They don't show that - the whole disembowelment. And then I've seen the whole scene, where they pull her stomach out.

Mr. Sleazoid: Did any of the actors balk when you asked them to do that?

Watkins: Not really, and you have to understand nobody got paid a nickel for that film. The budget was really zero. My father worked at GAF so I got the film for free. I got the processing for free, the printing for free. My friends were all in it, so that was free. My friend Paul gave me his 16mm Arriflex from his film department. Nobody got paid. And nobody ever did get anything. I borrowed \$1500 from my father. We're talking '72 here - so what would that be now? \$8,000, \$9,000 (*laughs*). It was just nothin'.

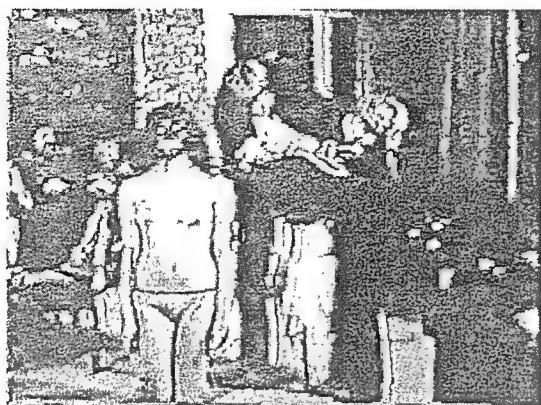


Terry dominating his gang of creeps

My original cut - very pretentious. It does exist in a black and white print that I used for dubbing. I dubbed it the first time. Francis Ford Coppola set me up in Princeton, New Jersey in this dubbing studio. So myself and a few of the actors went down there and dubbed it. But then when the distributors re-dubbed it they used my voice but they never cleaned up the loops... you know, you say to me now "I like the weird dubbing because it throws you off more." But I've always been embarrassed by the dubbing in that picture. I hate it. Please get that fact across. And I hate the wrong end that says Terry

went to prison for 99 years. That wasn't me. That was a distributor that tacked that on

Mr. Sleazoid: When I first saw it I didn't know if it was made by a foreign film crew because of the odd dubbing, but it adds to the disaffection of the movie.



The orgy with Nancy Palmer in blackface

Watkins: That was an accident, though (laughs) because I cringe!

Mr. Sleazoid: Was *Last House* your first movie?

Watkins: Yeah. I was editing Nicholas Ray's last picture and I met this Czechoslovakian guy in the Chelsea Hotel. Nick didn't want to direct anymore, but he was working on this half assed picture, but I was honored to be on it with Nick because I was a kid. This Czech guy said, "If I were you I'd make a movie about Charlie Manson because you look pretty weird" (laughs).



Terry goes to work on Mr. Palmer

Sleazoid: How did the snuff movie aspect get in it?

Watkins: In July of 1972, I had read the book *The Family* about Manson. And in that book that was the first time I had heard of a mention that people were killing people on film. I liked that guy Bobby Beausoliel.



Shooting the snuff loops

Mrs. Sleazoid: I know Bobby.

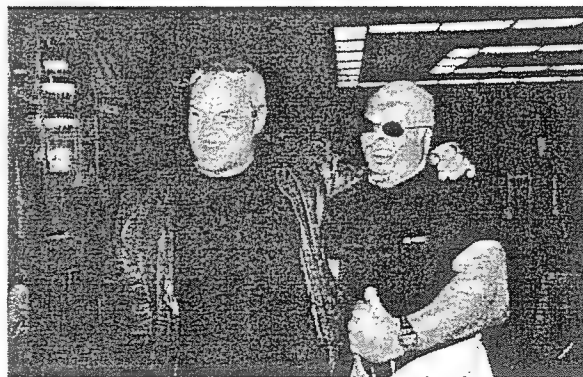
Watkins: Really?

Mrs. Sleazoid: He's still in the can.

Watkins: He'll never get out (both laugh). I was always obsessed with guys like Beausoliel. I mean, *they're not afraid of anything*.

Mrs. Sleazoid: Do you have any regrets about the path you took in life – being obsessed with making movies?

Watkins: Nope.



Watkins at Chiller Theater Convention with Witching Hour Video's Hayden Milligan

Doris Wishman 19??-2002

Exploitation film director Doris Wishman passed away on August 10, 2002 in Miami. Prolific in a scene dominated by men, Doris carved her niche early on in 1959 with her libido driven, idiosyncratic films full of New York hard knocks and grizzle. Her considerable body of work traversed every form of legally permissible sex feature. She was undisputed Queen of sexual dysphoria.

Beginning with *Hideout in the Sun*, Doris' first features were nudist camp films in the late 1950s and early 1960s. *Nude on the Moon* displayed Doris' no-budget inventiveness, having topless "Moon Dolls" sporting pipe cleaner antennae emerging from bouffant hairdos. *Blaze Starr Goes Nudist* utilized the gimmick of a famous stripper as exhibitionistic focal point.

The psychosexual underpinnings of Wishman's work emerged fully in her 1960s and early 1970s roughies, sexploitation features that pivot on sadomasochism, violation and brutality. In her films *Bad Girls Go To Hell*, *The Sex Perils of Paulette* and *Love Toy* sex is a venal act for money, duty, barter, material gain, or extracted unwillingly by malevolent men.

Deadly Weapons and *Double Agent 73* starred stripper Chesty Morgan, renown for her natural 73-inch endowments. These films brought Wishman her big attention. Chesty lugs her enormous bust around like two hated shopping bags she couldn't lose while nodding throughout the films. The star and director hated each other and it's apparent. Wishman's chaotic aesthetic includes shots of random household objects and disorienting m.o.s. sound made her beloved to those entranced by exploitation movies' unintended kaleidoscopic effects.

When XXX came to town in the mid 70's, Wishman moved on with the times, making the hardcore sex movies *Satan Was A Lady* and *Come With Me*. Wishman was so unnerved by the sight of the performers having sex that she'd demurely leave the room and let an assistant shoot the footage in her place. In 1980, Wishman's penultimate shocker *Let Me Die A Woman* hit 42nd Street and made her a legend in her own time. A hodgepodge of stiflingly claustrophobic sets, random reaction shots, stock footage of sex change surgery, interviews with Times Square streetwalker trannies, as well as a "doctor" host reading off cue cards and wielding a pointer stick at the shriveled genitals of the sexually malcontent, it also had a self-castration scene. Not a film for the squeamish. It took a lot to shock and disquiet the Deuce and Wishman had done it.

With *A Night to Dismember* Doris attempted to get out of the sex ghetto and hook into the blood horror market but her effort was without the special effects that gorehounds demand. She left filmmaking and moved from Queens to Coral Gables, Florida. Where she operated a lingerie shop. Doris' devoted biographer Michael Bowen revived retrospectives of her films. She appeared in person before appreciative cult film audiences all over the country. Although well past retirement age, after these appearances Doris was freshly inspired after feeling appreciated and began directing again. Her last film, *Dildo Heaven*, was recently screened at the Chicago Underground Film Festival. Joel Shepard, the Film and Video Curator of San Francisco's Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, saw it and calls it "Doris' 8½."

Wishman's films, often made under pseudonyms, have been interpreted as inspirational shoestring wonders, unintentionally funny camp, or hostile sexual manifestos. Like many self-conscious auteurs, Wishman obscured many facts of her life, including her age. Her passport states that she was born in 1920, but her family believed she was in her 90s when she passed away. Although sexually explosive in her art, Doris was, in her private life, sexually naïve. By her own admission, she'd had "two husbands and a lover, and that's my quota." Once when a fan snapped a photo at a screening Doris screamed in vain horror, "You monster!" Fellow roughie auteur John Amero, who's seen it all in world of Times Square exploitation, described Doris as "both very naïve and very knowing at the same time."

Exploitation is full of paradoxes. Doris Wishman was one of the biggest.

On Seeing *Let Me Die A Woman*

To mark Doris Wishman's passing, a variety of individuals have contributed their experiences with regard to Doris' landmark Sleazoid film, *Let Me Die A Woman*.

Bill Landis

Sleazoid Express/Metasex Editor-Publisher

Co-author of "Sleazoid Express: A Mind Twisting Tour Through the Grindhouses of Times Square"

www.sleazoidexpress.com

www.geocities.com/metasex

Let Me Die A Woman premiered June 1980 at the Anco Theater and became the first movie to be covered in the original *Sleazoid Express*. *Sleazoid* had just started as a one-sheet bulletin that came out every other week, covering the movies that played the Deuce virtually the week they appeared. *Let Me Die A Woman* fit the *Sleazoid* theology of reviewing films that otherwise would be critically ignored. Films that Anthology Film Archives and *The Village Voice* felt were beneath contempt. Films that were premiered in theatrical settings that few would admit venturing into. The Anco, in particular, was one of the Deuce's worst kept and most menacing grindhouses. A known hellhole for decades, the Anco contained passed out hustlers – rough trade that existed to finance their next blackout - malevolent phony drug salesmen and pickpockets festering in filthy, broken seats. The floor was sticky from spilled soda, smuggled in malt liquors and bodily fluids. The sound system was nearly inaudible no matter where you sat. A lot of area criminals hid out in the Anco knowing that no beaten confused and traumatized tourist they'd robbed would lead a cop back there. The poor bastard would be too ashamed.

The Anco's management knew of its audience of rotten eggs, and they'd change the feature at least twice a week. The same patrons would always be sitting in the aisles anyway, so they'd welcome the change of entertainment. But *Let Me Die A Woman* left the fifty or so Anco denizens in the aisles disoriented, rather than laughing, shocked or entertained. And this is a crowd that appreciated movies as diverse as *The Toolbox Murders*, *Slaughter Hotel*, *Twitch of the Death Nerve* (under the moniker *Last House on the Left II*), and the Roger Corman espionage obscurity, *What's In It For Harry*.

Let Me Die A Woman dealt with transsexuality in the most tasteless and sleazy way possible. A stylistic throwback to roadshow sex instruction films, the movie was released without an MPAA seal through a makeshift distributor calling itself Hygiene Films. In reality, Hygiene was another front for Chelly Wilson's distributing activities, even though she operated a primary company called Variety Pictures.

Like Doris Wishman's other films, such as the Chesty Morgan vehicles *Deadly Weapons* and *Double Agent 73*, the movie is a study in bad film aesthetics. It's randomly shot, haphazardly edited, incorporates elements of freak exploitation, and a great deal of filler footage, from Harry Reems footage snatched from another Wishman stag films to stock footage of people walking on Manhattan's impersonal workaday Sixth Avenue. The movie features Dr. Leo Wollman who presides over the trannies like a cult leader. He highlights the shriveled weenies of pre-ops with a metal pointer stick. True to form, the movie includes a brief, startling view of an actual sex change operation, as well as a jarring scene of simulated self-castration employing a hammer and a chisel. That scene almost had the Deuce audience vomiting in the aisles. The revolting self-castration sequence has since been snipped out of virtually all of the videotape renderings of the film.

Drag queens have always been a focal point of real life terroristic drama on the Deuce. Either as the "wives" of rough trade hustlers or drama bound razor-wielding streetwalking hookers. The old Deuce had spots like Keystone Books, which were dedicated to crossdressing and transsexualism films, books and mags. The dildos that "Doc" Wollman presents in the movie appear as if they were culled from those very Deuce scumatoriums. The movie also spawned a tie-in paperback that was sold for about a dollar in area adult bookstores. Thus, *Let Me Die A Woman* had its niche in 42nd Street's sexual zeitgeist. However, it's an ugly and unpleasant movie to sit through. Any of its unintentional laughs are funnier in description than to actually witness.

* * *

Sam McAbee
5 Minutes to Live Video & DVD
www.5minutesonline.com

At the age of 15, I first saw *Let Me Die A Woman* on a grainy, washed out bootleg tape I rented from a video store located in a junky infested alleyway in Atlanta, Georgia. It was the first Doris Wishman movie I ever watched and it remains my favorite to this day. I think it's safe to say that this is one of those movies that doesn't go well with pizza, what with all the ultra cringe inducing mondo surgical footage and uncomfortable "clinical" exam moments that make up the bulk of the film. The only relief is watching Dr. Leo Wollman poke the transvestites in attendance with his pointer. I remember staring at my TV with a kind of glazed disbelief, not knowing what to do with myself as the film finally ended. Should I run for the bathroom and make sure my manhood had not withered up and taken permanent residence inside my body? Or should I run outside with a bell and lantern singing the praises of this one of a kind whack job movie?! Later that week I rented every Doris Wishman movie I could find. I have not been the same since.

Between the years 1996-2001, I co-owned a small weirdo video store in Chicago, Illinois and encountered a lot of strange people. But the absolute strangest person was a Cajun man dressed in jeans and a blue hospital shirt (the kind you wear when you're a patient, not an employee) with his arm in a cast that always dripped some kind of clear liquid all over the counter and the floor. He would come in just about everyday, and not just once a day, multiple times, and rent sexploitation films and straight porno movies (mainly 70's classic stuff). One day, he rented *Let Me Die A Woman* and returned the tape that night through the drop slot. I didn't see him again for an entire year. When he finally returned, he had made a disturbing and shocking transformation into a pseudo-woman, complete with breasts, pigtails and makeup! He even brought along his incredibly disturbing boyfriend/girlfriend hybrid who looked like a cross between Lou Ferrigno and Julia Childs! So I guess it's safe to say that *Let Me Die A Woman* affected him as well.

* * *

Michael Bowen
Wishman Biographer
www.doriswishman.com

My first sighting of *Let Me Die A Woman* was on video, I'm afraid, although I have been fortunate enough to screen a 35 print of the film at a few Wishman retros I've organized (thanks to Jimmy Maslon) and the audiences went NUTZ! It's almost inconceivable to most people (and I understand why!) that this film should even exist - not so much because it's so graphic (which it really isn't), but because the wigs are so bad and the dildos so obscene looking and Leo Wollman is reading cue cards... Cue cards, for Christsake! (And Doris always denied he was doing so). Doris was always proud that the cast was made up of real transsexuals (even if it's only partially true) and claimed "I paid them all very well - better than my other actors - because I felt a little sorry for them. They were somehow so sad." And there IS a sadness to the film that never fails to impress me as well. Perhaps this is the reason it disturbs so many people so profoundly. Who wants to admit that a nut-job pseudo-documentary full of drag queens actually makes them feel a little bit sad...?

Paul Gaita
Worldly Remains Magazine
www.worldlyremains.com

I didn't see *Let Me Die A Woman* until 1998, when it ran as part of a two-day Doris Wishman festival at the NuArt Theatre in West Los Angeles. I remember seeing a reproduction of the poster when I was younger and being baffled by it - at the time, I was just starting to get a whiff of the exploitation world that lay beyond the Saturday afternoon horror movies that I was used to seeing. The poster looked like something that might have been

produced by Martians. I couldn't understand why someone would make this film, but yet I was fascinated by the idea all the same.

My viewing companion was Michael Bowen, Doris' biographer. Michael was kind enough to point out some of the details about the film-the footage of Vanessa Del Rio that was from (or would later turn up in) *The Haunted Pussy* (a.k.a. *Come With Me*), for example.

I remember the theater being fairly empty-the place had been at capacity for the earlier feature, *Bad Girls Go To Hell*, but *Let Me Die A Woman* was a bit too grim for the "bad movie" fans. The NuArt isn't a warm or comfortable space - like most theaters in L.A., it's a bit cold and hard-edged, and half-empty theaters can really seem cavernous. I remember people leaving the theater throughout the screening. There wasn't a lot of laughing or shouting at the screen. Those few left in the theater after the lights came up around 11 p.m. got up out of their seats, looked at each other, and left without a word. I don't know what sort of payoff they were expecting - if they were looking for cheap laughs, they didn't find them.

I also remember being very depressed by the film - the people were ugly and unhappy, even after their operations. The few smiles they offered looked as if they had been carved into their faces as part of the surgery. Everyone looked worn-out, as if living as a post-op or trans on a daily basis was mentally and emotionally exhausting (which is probably the case). The hideous interiors and clothing that are earmarks of Doris' films - they act as a sort of camp life preserver to keep you afloat in all the sexual misery and obsession - seemed more depressing in this film, because the subjects were so sad. I had been in a lot of houses that looked like the ones in *Let Me Die A Woman* while growing up in suburban Massachusetts, so maybe that's why it was such a depressing situation. It made me think that maybe those places - the homes of my parents' friends or relatives, or even my own home - were as sad as the ones in the film, and I was just too young to notice. It wasn't a very pleasant thought. The surgery footage was gruesome, to be expected, but I remember being more repulsed by the doctor, especially when he gestured at the pre-op's genitals with what I recall being either a pencil or a sort of metal pointer. The person on the table shouldn't have been in that room, being poked by a seedy doctor while a film camera whirled away. We shouldn't have seen that. There was a person on the table, not an animal or a corpse. In retrospect, it's probably the most unsettling thing I've ever seen in an exploitation film, as bad as any mondo. I guess that's my overall take on the film -- it's a documentary that should be compassionate, but instead comes across like autopsy footage. It's depressing to think about it even now

* * *

Lisa Petrucci
Something Weird Video
www.somethingweird.com

Well here's a brief comment about *Let Me Die A Woman*. It's been awhile since it so I'm going on my first impression. When I think of Doris Wishman, the last film I associate with her diverse and quirky oeuvre is *Let Me Die A Woman*. It stands out like a hard dick on a pre-op tranny. Mostly, I just ask myself, "What the hell was a nice middle-aged lady doing making a film like *this*?" It's hard enough imagining her directing nudist camp and sexploitation movies, let alone a pseudo-documentary about transsexuals. And the fact that she published an informative little illustrated *book* to accompany the film is even more mind-numbing.

Ms. Wishman has pointed out on numerous occasions that *every* film is an exploitation picture, so I guess sex change operations were as good a subject as any and something she thought would appeal to an audience. But it's unlikely a whole lot of regular folks saw *Let Me Die A Woman* when it came out in theaters. And those who unknowingly wandered into the grindhouse looking for dose of normal hardcore must have got the shock of their movie-going lives.

Ask many men about *Let Me Die A Woman* and they will visibly cringe. Apparently, the actual sex-change operation footage is difficult viewing for the average he-man-type male. I know a number of serious exploitation film fanatics who refuse to sit through it. But these are the same guys who will happily sit through a movie that features females being sadistically sliced and diced, without flinching at all. Perhaps seeing a real-life penis being

surgically mutilated is just too much for some. The ultimate male phobia put right out there to consider up close and personal (and larger-than-life if seen in a theater!). I have to admit I was fascinated by the procedure, and thank Doris for presenting it in such an entertaining context.

My favorite part of *Let Me Die A Woman* is the support group meeting with all the homely drag queens. They look like they should be playing canasta with Doris instead.

* * *

Joel Shepard
Film and Video Coordinator
Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco

My memory of *Let Me Die A Woman* is hazy yet brutal. I rented it on video during the worst period of my life, constantly drunk and high and reeling from the break-up of my first love. I was a total mess, beyond a mess. All I remember is slipping in and out of consciousness while I tried and failed to focus on the movie, hallucinating visions of bloody wounds and wires pulled through black pools of liquid. It made me sick, and I turned it off.

* * *

Matt Walker
Editor Supreme
"Sleazoid Express: A Mind Twisting Tour Through the Grindhouses of Times Square"

It's been a while since I've seen *Let Me Die A Woman*, so my memory's not the best. Here are a few thoughts, though:

To watch *Let Me Die A Woman* is to experience the sense of being trapped in an imitation wood-paneled insane asylum on 6th Avenue at 42nd St.--that or a sealed-off, flood-lit motel room reeking of sour milk and house paint. I was too young to have first seen the movie in a theater, and that's probably a good thing too. Even on video, though, it packs a punch. Nevertheless, while Wishman's filmmaking never really amuses you, it never really depresses you, either. Instead, it just hits you with a kind of momentary demoralization. You watch *Let Me Die A Woman* and you just shake your head and frown.

* * *

Michelle Clifford
Sleazoid Express/Metasex Editor - Publisher
Co-author of "Sleazoid Express: A Mind Twisting Tour Through the Grindhouses of Times Square"
www.sleazoidexpress.com
www.geocities.com/metasex

I don't like Doris Wishman. I don't like that she doesn't take responsibility for being a pornographer. For some societally twisted reason she demands you take her as a sweet innocent woman. She plays the Leni Riefenstahl card. She sets up the porn shoot and gets the actors in place and as the actual balling is taking place she leaves the room. Pornographer interruptus. As if sex is beneath her and the actors are freaks or lowlifes too disgusting for her to bear witness to. She can give the orders but cannot take the responsibility of what she's done. She's like "Me? A Pornographer? How distasteful. NO Way! I'm a nice old lady." Bullshit. And she's as crude as the rest of the hardcore makers who fuck over actors on pay by clipping scenes from other films they were paid minimally for and just using their performances unpaid in further films like the actors are nothing more than paper dolls. Harry Reems and Vanessa Del Rio weren't paid to be in *Let Me Die A Woman*. Their performances are cut from one of Doris' porn films and pasted in. Harry, in particular, wouldn't have wanted to appear in such a homosexually driven movie. That was *never* his style. Vanessa would have *demand*ed payment. Doris is as sleazy and unethical as any other low-end cheapskate hardcore pornographer.

The doctor in the film is repulsive. A side shot of him looks like it was lifted from the Nazi propaganda film *The Eternal Jew*. The Dr. also has something to do with religion, as is oft the case with physicians involved with transsexuals. They have a "creator" delusion. I disagree with the term transsexual unless it's used to describe someone who's had the full operation. The pre-ops walk into meetings where the doctor tells them "You look beautiful today!" They don't! They look like any other homely as shit mess Times Square pre-op, homicidal and ready to take out a switchblade to off themselves or someone else. The good Dr. tells pre-ops – people who merely have had the tit injections – that they're women, and that's a boldfaced lie. They're men who have merely got some hormones and breast enlargement injections. That does *not* make them women. It makes them delusional and miserable tied to a freak enabler svengali. It makes them hopeful for a future that will never manifest hand held by a quack with a creator complex who's as disturbed as they are.

Let Me Die A Woman is all about homosexual self-hatred. The pre- and post- ops won't accept the truth of their own homosexuality. When they do have sex, they go with men who like anal sex, so it's all about pain. These delusionals still sport cocks. No matter how small and useless and pathetic they are they represent their masculinity. And denying they exist is just insane. I think this "Dr." should have his license taken away.

The doctor keeps his charges bombed on different pharmaceutical cocktails so they're as docile as cult members. "Yes doctor, I *am* beautiful," they chant back at him in their group support meeting as if in a dominance session. The people in this meeting are as ugly and disturbed looking as a psyche ward. The Dr. proudly demonstrates his technique of injection, which involves a hard slap at the moment of needle insertion. – a completely unnecessary move with an intramuscularly given injection.

A Latino post op that explains his life is the main interview subject. He reveals that he was never able to admit being a homosexual. He's not trapped in the body of female – he simply can't deal with being a homosexual man. And the physical pain of a sex change – which he described as excruciating- is better than the pain of homosexuality. His interviews are framed in an ugly dark blue room that displays Doris' visual aesthetic. The man passes easily for a mamasita flagrantly sporting braless big jugs for Doris' peeping eye camera. He admits that sex is less than thrilling. He says he's read of multiple orgasms and he's lucky if within a relationship he has any at all.

Another post op tells about his little girl being so understanding about his condition. Then after this emotional stripping he is made to disrobe and insert a metal dildo into his new vagina....just to show us it works like a real one. Classy..*no*? I'm sure his daughter will understand that display as well. Hell, kids are resilient. And what a proper place to discuss her in a Times Square exploitation flick just before doing a vagina insertion trick. The Dr. beams at his freak creation.

No mistake that Doris would gravitate towards this subject matter: It's all about denial.... Secrecy. Hell, she's a pornographer who left the room for the sex scenes. And she makes sure we know the exact supposed count of her lovers as to bizarrely prove she is no loose woman. As a woman she is a discredit to her gender. The whole fetish factor of *Let Me Die A Woman* is that a female made it instead of a man. When I first met Mr. Sleazoid and asked him who controlled Times Square's adult theaters, I was blown away to learn that lesbians ran the whole show, from the all-male houses to the live show showplaces. Anyone ever wonder about Doris' covert sexual tendencies? If she were a lesbian we would all be the very last to know.

As the study on female bullies *Odd Girl Out* points out, society doesn't expect such hostility and exploitativeness from females. The hidden and unexpected female hostility described so well in that key psychiatric book is demonstrated by Doris' cinematic approach in *Let Me Die A Woman*.

Wait for the feeble, ass backward Hollywood version of Doris' life, ala *Ed Wood*. It's the type of material that major studios eat up for breakfast. See Doris as a happy go lucky housewife who makes kooky movies and her venal, thieving distributor, Jerry Balsam, turned into nothing more than an innocuous William Castle style cigar chomper. See the porno actors she got over on turned into harmless flits.

MISTER... I WAS MADE FOR IT

"Twenty years of research went into the book, plus two years of plotting and eight months of actual writing. It put the word 'geek' into common language. It is nice to know that someone remembers it." –William Lindsay Gresham

NIGHTMARE ALLEY

(1947) Director: Edmond Gouling

William Lindsay Gresham, who wrote the book that was adapted to the film *Nightmare Alley*, is considered one of the fathers of the noir novel. He wrote about carnival life in a graphic, shocking way, the way it's actually lived. Gresham hailed from Maryland, but became obsessed with scam scarred carny life when as a young boy he had contact with Coney Island. It went on to fascinate him as well as shape and inform his artistic aesthetic. Coming into contact with a netherworld insular private society so young has changed and shaped many who have had the exposure. The list is flamboyant who had close contact with Coney Island, or Times Square or Boston's infamous Combat Zone. Some notables besides Gresham changed and shaped by this kind of insiders vs. squares and dupes environment early in life are Mae West, Anton LaVey, Jamie Gillis, Bill Landis, Michelle Clifford, and David Friedman.

Gresham grew up into an alcoholic – and probably a drug addict, considering the euphemisms he used in the 1930s and 1940s in his books and his inability to control his abusiveness towards his wife and small children. His wife was eventually forced to leave him. She went on to seek refuge and ultimately marriage with English mystic and author C.S. Lewis. This relationship was explored in the 1993 film *Shadowlands*. Unfortunately, the film's plot ignores the important fact that she was fleeing the suicidally depressive Gresham. A fact that would have made the film halfway interesting.

In 1962 Gresham checked into a Manhattan fleabag hotel under the false name of Asa Kimball. There he quietly committed suicide. At the time, the only person who bothered to document his death was the bridge columnist from *The New York Times*.



One of the few photos of William Lindsay Gresham

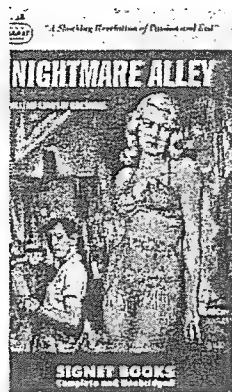
It's called *depression*....

Since his passing, Gresham's books, from *Nightmare Alley* to *Monster Midway*, have been a huge influence on many.

Incredibly, *Nightmare Alley* was made into a mainstream Hollywood movie in the midst of the censorship dominated 1940s under the auspices of comedian George Jessel who felt the importance of producing the film. He was remarkably faithful to the source material.

Nightmare Alley used to be a favorite of young Mr. Sleazoid when it would be on Manhattan's local Channel 9. His father, who had grown up in Coney Island where the Landis Family owned a hotel on the Boardwalk, attested to the authenticity of the film. Including the fact that a geek show was referred to as "The Wild Man of Borneo" back in the day. Mr. Sleazoid's mother was horrified and disgusted that her son was obsessed with this movie. And that his father would admit that such sick scenes actually existed. She preferred to omit such blights from her memory of the Coney Boardwalk.

As Adolph Hitler and Jim Jones have astutely noted, "Those who refuse to remember the past are condemned to repeat it." A prophecy not lost on Mr. & Mrs. Sleazoid.



Rare original pulp cover for Nightmare Alley

Nightmare Alley opens at a crowded carnival. The Popeye barker attracts the audience over to the geek show with the statement that it's "solely presented in the interest of education and science. Is he man or is he beast? Some scientists believe he is the missing link. But under that shaggy mane lies the brain of a beast. Now folks, it's feeding time..." The barker throws a bunch of live chickens to the geek, who bites their heads off (although this is offscreen). People react with "that's horrible!" and flee for their lives.



Original poster for Nightmare Alley

Watching the geek show is the swarthy hero, Stanton Carlyle (Tyrone Power). The barker questions Stan why he's bothering to watch the show "when it doesn't have a skirt in it." Stan wonders aloud "how can a guy get so low? I mean, is a guy *born* that way?"

The carny owner retorts "Look, son, when you're around this carnival longer you'll learn to quit asking questions!"

Stan is a guy from nothing who grew up in an orphanage. He zeroes in on Zeena (Joan Blondell) and her mind-reading act. Zeena tells Stan that a geek is always a sore spot in a carnival because a lot of performers won't work one with it. Stan joins her act gathering questions from the audience. Zeena tosses them down a jar and sets them ablaze. Unknown to the crowd Zeena's partner, Pete, an old alcoholic, writes the questions and answers on a mirror under the jar.

Stan will fuck over anyone to get ahead. Stan is the kinda guy who looks out for number one. He learns that Pete and Zeena used to be a top vaudeville attraction from Molly, the pretty young partner of the strongman. Pete and Zeena had a fantastically popular act back in the day fueled by a secret code in which Pete was blindfolded and certain intonations and word combinations in Zeena's voice would reveal the questions from the crowd written secretly on a piece of paper that Zeena would collect around the cabaret room. They were a hot act playing the poshest joints entertaining the swells of society. Once Stan learns this he's determined to learn this trick and take it over and restart it anew by Any Means Necessary.

After kissing up to Zeena, Stan learns of the reasons the act went down the tubes. Pete started to get too fucked up and incapable to hold it together. He's degenerated into a waste case, barely functioning with constant care by Zeena, whom Pete treats as one would a fool who is stupid to stick to an anvil drowning her in an ocean. A masochist to take care of him. A soft touch. He knows she's a fool not to cut him loose and he preys on her affection toward the old dope addict. All throughout the film, drinking is meticulously referred to in terms of drug references. It's the only way the censors could let it by. One grizzled night after the Geek goes wild screaming and running around naked having withdrawals after being cut off cold turkey by the carny owner, Pete gets the creeps and needs a shot. Stan comes across him and buys a bottle for Pete who is starting to have the DT's just watching the geek go off. "It ain't right to just cut a guy off like that," Pete notes with his own discomfort in mind. It's Stan's selfish plan to get Pete shit faced and have him reveal the winning act he once played to stunned audiences with Zeena. Pete laments to Stan that the poor geek does the job for "a bottle a day and a dry place to sleep it off. If it weren't for Zeena,

they'd be saying that about me. Poor Pete. Pete the geek." Pete starts imbibing and revealing different mental acts of trickery, starting with different stock readings that fit everybody to hook them. Including Stan to his amazement.

The next day Pete is found dead from alcohol poisoning. You're not sure if the guy at the carnival sold Stan a bad bottle, or that Stan wanted Pete out of the way and slipped him wood alcohol on purpose. What with Stan always looking out for Number One. Stan starts doing the mental act with Zeena. Just as he'd planned. But then he's caught flirting with Molly, and is forced into a shotgun wedding by the offended Zeena and the overbearing Strongman. But then Stan realizes they actually did him a favor. He knows the act by now. He can easily ditch the carny and start playing the big rooms in Manhattan and Chicago for good money. And so it goes and successfully at that.



Zeena and the Strongman force Stan into shotgun wedding with underage Molly

Molly and Stan become highly successful nightclub performers. Stan plays the act blindfolded and Molly reads him the questions. A lady psychiatrist tries to trip him up, but is unsuccessful. Stan, piqued by her bitchiness and challenging nature, pays her an office visit with a business proposition. Perhaps she'll tell him the private secrets of her wealthy clientele and then Stan can move into the spiritualism "spook racket." At first, she's offended, and kicks him out of her office.

Stan and Molly get an unannounced and dreadfully unwanted visit from Bruno the

strongman and Zeena. Only showing up to cause trouble for a guy who screwed her over on her money making act, Zeena does a tarot card reading and warns Stan not to go into the spook racket. "The Hanged Man" is the card that comes up. Just as it had for old Pete just before he died. "*The cards never lie*," insists Zeena. Stan throws them out. He becomes increasingly tense. A hotel masseuse rubs him with wood alcohol, and he has a panic attack thinking about Pete's death and his hand in the blood. He goes to the lady psychiatrist's office, this time to spill the beans. On himself for some relief. She calls him perfectly normal, and becomes more intrigued by the proposition that they do business together.



Molly and Stan

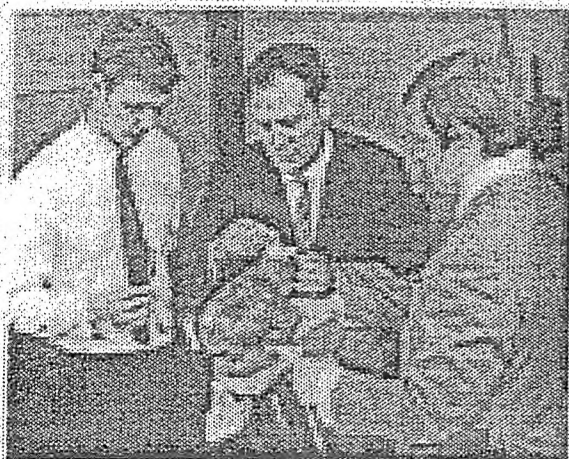
Stan faints at one of his performances, claiming he got a message from an old society matron's dead daughter. Eventually he gets photos of a rich man's dead girlfriend and when the man insists Stan bring her apparition to life for his eyes to see, if only for a moment, the ante is upped and Molly is made to impersonate her. When the old man starts acting pathetic, weeping on his knees, crying out to God in worship to the apparition. Molly breaks down and blows the act. Stan knocks the geezer to the floor, tells Molly to run away and takes off to the woman psychiatrist. He stashes \$150,000 that the sucker had given him with her for safekeeping. The lady shrink tries to get frisky with Stan but he rebuffs her sexual invite, as he does with all the women in the film. Later the shrink winds up playing the player when she gives Stan a roll of one dollar bills instead of the hundred and fifty grand he'd given her.

Stan puts Molly on a train. He thoughtfully gives her a generous bankroll and

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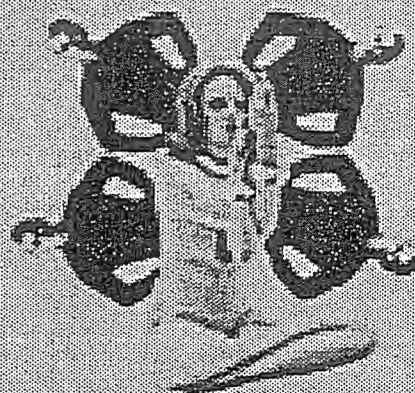
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tells her to go back to the carnival. He starts drinking, eventually drifting into a hobo colony. Finally he shows up at the carnival, years later and completely disheveled and aged beyond his years.

The carny owner offers him a "snort" of whisky. Stan tries to sell him on a mentalist act. But the Carny owner sets him straight. No want for that stuff here. What he does offer him is a gig that'll "keep you in coffee and cakes. A bottle every day. A place to sleep it off in. Anyway it's only temporary... just until we can find a real geek."

"GEEK?"

"Ya know what a geek is, don't ya?"

"Yeah, sure, I know what a geek is."

"Do you think you can handle it?"

"Mister - I was *made* for it..."

Stan has finally come full circle. It had always been his destiny and he knew it. After his first day as geek, Stan goes berserk, running around with a two by four. He's lost his mind. Molly spots him and offers to take care of him - much like Zeena had with Pete. "Stan, it's Molly. I've looked everywhere for you, Stan. Don't you recognize me? It's Molly!"

The film ends on a more upbeat note than the Gresham book. Gresham's ending has Stan morbidly offered the job as geek and is left tragically at that.

Nightmare Alley is engrossing and disturbing. One of the very best exploitation films ever made. Crafted with class, it manages to be extremely shocking without resorting to any cheap pyrotechnics or explicit scenes. Apart from the subject matter, what is startling about the movie is its multiple drug references. Alcohol is termed a "snort," "shot" or "sniff" - words that are normally associated with hard drug use. Religion is depicted as nothing but a scam used to part people from their cash and morally reprehensible to anyone who genuinely cares about humans. Stan knows well about God and sinners. He was made to study the bible at the orphanage he was stuck in as a throwaway child. He learned religion as a way to manipulate the Holly Roller warden into letting

him out. *Nightmare Alley* is so relentlessly human, with such a thick sense of evil, betrayal and desperation of soul that it's surprising that a major studio handled the subject so well. Or at all.

The cast is completely convincing, with accurate aging jobs done on everyone from Molly to Stan, who is believably wrecked by the end. Tyrone Power is usually associated with glamorous swashbuckler roles, like *The Black Swan*, but this is his finest performance. Power worked hard at the role and demanded to be cast as Stan. Stan is a grasping, at times malicious individual, but Power makes it completely understandable why he behaves like that. It's only human in his situation. What life had dealt him. You only live once and hindsight is 20/20.

Nightmare Alley is a beloved Sleazoid chestnut. It's never been officially released by the big studios for home viewing, although it's been a frequent replay on the American Movie Classics cable channel. The entertainment company 5 Minutes to Live offers an excellent copy of it on Video and DVD.



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